

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

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Adam Helms: Hinterland

September 8 – October 6, 2007

Opening reception September 7, 2007 6-8 pm

Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present the first New York solo exhibition by Adam Helms.

In this exhibition, Helms further develops his longstanding fascination with guerrilla warfare, militias and the ethos of the American past and present in a variety of media including drawing, sculpture and silkscreen. Drawing upon source material from his research of archetypes concerning banditry, frontiers and environments of conflict, Helms's works collectively conjure a land on the outskirts, a backcountry, a hinterland.

In the main gallery is a trio of large, meticulously rendered landscapes in charcoal. Though no singularly recognizable locus emerges in these works, each echoes the great vastness of the undulating American West. Underlining his talent as a draftsman, Helms applies the same relentless precision so characteristic of his previous graphite figural drawings to the intricate markmaking of these new works. Every gradation of shifting light is rendered. Skies feel simultaneously troubled and placated all within the same work. The drawings recall those Western landscapes so detailed by Cormac McCarthy in his novels: "Crumpled butcherpaper mountains lay in sharp shadowfold with every hanging cloud in a moment of change." Yet here, Helms's works are also imbued with a subversive quality that counters the romanticism inherent to McCarthy's depictions. Their hyperrealist detail alludes to disquieting notions of sovereignty and a fetishization of the landscape's role in darker periods of American history.

Helms's two sculptures realize that which is both present and suggested in the drawings. They hint at a possible civilization in the drawings. An abandoned, rickety structure is actualized as a wooden construction reminiscent of some fallen outpost. No discernable human presence remains though no carnage appears either; the fortification is reproduced within the gallery as a relic of past battles or a portent of future ones. Death is rendered elsewhere, in the form of a taxidermied buffalo. Removed from its environs, the buffalo is recontextualized recalling its own demise as well as that of the conquered West. Buffalo appear in Helms's earlier work as well, serving as masks to obscure the drawn faces of his fictional NFA soldiers, and acting also as a nod to 19th-century western genre American art.

The figure reappears in a suite of double-sided silk screens on vellum in the front gallery. Depicting sinister masks and balaclavas screened upon found black and white images of individuals involved in both historical and contemporary radical conflict, these cloaked works parallel men of another time with those of the present day. Evoking storied western bandits, guerrilla fighters, American Civil War combatants, Chechen rebels and Al Qaeda members, while contrasting their individual identities and histories with masks and hoods, reshapes them into archetypes. They stand as a grouping of anonymous terrorists, rebels and tacticians of violence, all provoking questions of identity concerning these very designations.

Adam Helms lives and works in New York. He was a recipient of the Rema Hort Mann Foundation Visual Grant Award and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award, and was a recent artist in residence at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas. The artist's recent exhibitions include "Adam Helms: Rising Down" at Sister Gallery, Los Angeles, "Phantasmania" at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, "Just Kick It Till It Breaks" at The Kitchen, New York, and "Ordinary Culture: Heikes/Helms/McMillian" at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Helms's work is included in the collections of the Walker Art Center, the Whitney Museum and the Dakis Joannou Collection.

Marianne Boesky Gallery is located at 509 West 24th Street, between 10th and 11th Avenues. Our hours are Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm.

Information & Image Requests:

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