

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

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**Melissa Gordon**

*A Lonely Crowd*

Project Space

September 11 – October 3, 2009

Opening reception Thursday, September 10, 2009, 6 – 8 pm

Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present Melissa Gordon's first solo exhibition in New York, which will be on view in the gallery's project space.

In a series of new paintings and sculptures, Gordon parses the dramatic role of tragic modern man in mid-century America. The exhibition takes its title from a popular sociological book *The Lonely Crowd* (David Riesman, 1950), which described a shift in the fabric of American post-war society, as it moved from being driven by production to consumption. Gordon is interested in the effects of what Riesman termed the 'other-driven' personality, an emerging American male social character bounded by concepts of community, self-projection and alienation.

Gordon's paintings are constructed of abstract systems of colors that are layered, transparent or woven in their patterning, referencing traditional and modern printing techniques. Images of male characters mid-performance are then embedded into the logic of these patterned matrices. Culled from post-war media images, archival photos and theater and dance stills, Gordon selects images that are gestural, in their subject matter as well as in their cropping. In doing so she makes abstractions with the figurative elements, paralleling the play between grand abstractions and reality in theater. In some instances, Gordon uses imagery from actual theater performances including *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (Edward Albee, 1962) and *All My Sons* (Arthur Miller, 1947). In others, the figures literally battle with the modern world, becoming stuck between cars or tangled amid coat hangers. With titles of the individual works such as "Character Development" and "Performing Frustration," alluding to theatrical sources and terminology, the artist also imbues the works with an element of slapstick and a residue of old Vaudeville.

In front of the paintings is a series of screen-like constructions of metal and painted panels, which together create a mis-en-scene of references. The structures are faced with traditional heraldic patterns and tartan, denoting clan or group identification. Other sides reveal fractured images of crowds, deteriorated through scale into an abstracted collective. In both the paintings and the sculptures, a clash of motifs and quotations create a complex set of decisive images and symbolic forms interrupting and overlapping one another. As in much of her work, Gordon's installation re-contextualizes socio-historical documents, and in doing so, assembles new angles on cultural material.

Melissa Gordon lives and works in Brussels, where she recently completed the Artist in Residence program at the Wiels Contemporary Art Centre. She studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, Cooper Union, New York and De Ateliers in Amsterdam. She has had solo exhibitions at Cosar HMT, Dusseldorf and Galerie Juliette Jongma, Amsterdam and will have a show with Ancient & Modern, London in September 2009. She will be included in the group show "Paying a Visit to Mary" at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, CT in January 2010.

Marianne Boesky Gallery is located at 509 West 24<sup>th</sup> Street, between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenues. Our hours are Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm. For further information or images, please contact Annie Rana at 212.680.9889 or [annie@marianneboeskygallery.com](mailto:annie@marianneboeskygallery.com).