

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

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JOHN WATERS: BEVERLY HILLS JOHN

January 9 – February 14, 2015 | Opening reception: Friday, January 9, 6 to 8pm

Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present *Beverly Hills John*, an exhibition of new work by John Waters. This is the artist's third solo show at the gallery, and will be on view from January 9 to February 14, 2015, at 509 W. 24th Street, New York.

For 50 years, John Waters has provoked the idiosyncrasies and hilarities of the movie business – the childhood stars, the trade lingo, and the false depiction of the ugly and the heroic. His photographic work (since 1995) has taken on politically charged topics of “cinematic correctness,” religious lunacy, and media manipulation. A recurring theme of Waters' oeuvre is the appropriation of images from other directors' films then rendered into storyboards that change the meaning of the first celluloid frames. Within these “little movies,” as Waters calls them, the artist redirects and highlights the damaged narrative that the public often overlooks.

More personal and self-critical, this new body of work seeks resolution to a set of questions about Waters' own experiences, or as he describes them: his childhood fame issues, his fear of false glamour and nouveau-riche comfort, his ongoing sexual attractions, and the possible horror and risk of a “careericide” with dignity. In *Self Portrait #5*, Waters portrays himself as a despised dogcatcher, nostalgically yearning for the days he was hated by the “moral” guardians. In *Beverly Hills John*, he imagines himself with a plastic surgery makeover, lip and cheek augmentation, Botox, and an alarming hair transplant. Hysterically poking fun at his own vulnerability in these images, Waters also sincerely asks whether his reinvention invites self-parody. Regarding these depictions, he writes, “Since I haven't made a film in ten years, must I give my entire life's work a facelift? Now that celebrity is the only obscenity left in the art world, where do I fit in?”

In the main gallery, Waters draws from his notoriety as a film director to present a new 74-minute video entitled *Kiddie Flamingos*. The video shows a table read of Waters' X-rated 1972 cult film *Pink Flamingos*, rewritten as a children's movie with an all-kid cast. Waters hopes that this defanged and desexualized sequel is even more perverse than the original, transferring innocence into a new kind of joyous, G-rated obscenity.

Other works in the exhibition speak to Waters' concerns about the contemporary art world more directly, the jargon of success, and the debatable definition of a ‘classic.’ In *Congratulations*, Waters riffs on the infamous red dot once commonly used in galleries to indicate a sale. In *Library Science 1-10*, Waters juxtaposes literature with related pornography, and in *Cancel Ansel*, he challenges the role of art to wreck the past. All of these statements at their core are a call to viewers to overthrow hierarchy and interrogate the very value systems in which we all participate. This is the pillar of Waters' craft, and the severity of his comedy.

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John Waters lives and works in Baltimore, MD. In September 2014, The Film Society of Lincoln Center honored Waters with a Film Retrospective, *Fifty Years of John Waters: How Much Can You Take?* As a visual artist Waters has had numerous solo exhibitions in the United States and abroad, including a complete retrospective, *John Waters: Change of Life*, at the New Museum, New York (2004), and most recently at Spruth Magers, Berlin (2014); McClain Gallery, Houston (2012); Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco (2010); Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans (2011); Albert Merola Gallery, Provincetown (2009) and Gagolian Gallery, LA (2009).

For further information about John Waters, please contact Adrian Turner at Adrian@marianneboeskygallery.com or 212.680.9889. For press information, please contact Elisa Smilovitz at elisa@mcclellandco.com or 551.486.3273.