



Operation Bulldog, 2011 (detail), Acrylic on polyester knit mesh, 84 x 100 inches (213 x 253 cm)

Aaron Johnson

Freedom from Want: New Paintings

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 15, 6 – 8 PM
September 15 – October 22, 2011

Stux Gallery is pleased to announce *Freedom from Want*, an exhibition of new paintings by **Aaron Johnson**. In paintings that are glimmering, seductive, and emanating light, Johnson's monsters are gruesome, sadistic, and spewing venom. This body of work is a bold reflection on the decaying excesses of our insatiable culture.

With obsessive enthusiasm, Johnson has delved deeper into his lexicon of Americana Grotesque and has plunged his fiendish monsters further into a theater of cosmic madness. These paintings invite us to binge upon an exquisitely detailed feast of severed heads, Uncle Sam monsters, sausage crucifixes, fried eagles, mashed guts, fuck-burgers, camel roast, mutant sea creatures, and oil oozing fresh from the rig. Lingered ghosts of a Rockwellian American idyll smile naively as the American dream boils over into an ecstatic hallucinatory nightmare. War machines, fueled by dog shit and the blood of Christ, churn across oil fields and battle fields, as the angel of death flies over with a cackle of furious laughter. As they reflect on the callous cruelty of war, the absurd intersection of religion and government, and the hell on earth that society thereby creates, these paintings come boldly forward from the artist's admiration of past masters such as Goya, Bosch, Dieric Bouts, and Otto Dix. These works expose a desiring machine monster that consumes perpetually until there is nothing left to do but devour itself.

The color in these works emanates exuberant pleasure, if not maniacal laughter, creating a marriage of humor with the darkness of the content. The pristine surfaces resonate in glowing crystalline layers, the result of Johnson's enigmatic process. He paints in reverse on clear plastic, building up layers of acrylic that are ultimately peeled off the plastic and mounted on polyester net. The techniques combine tightly controlled meticulous details with misbehaving splashes of poured paint. The weirdness of his process and his distinctive painterly vocabulary have grown together over the years in a symbiotic relationship, where the methods and the monsters worked together to invent each other. Painting in reverse is the artist's metaphor for scrutinizing the world from the inside out to reveal what lurks beneath the surface. The peeled paint technique is like a ripping off of the skin, a cracking open of the head, a release of the demons.

Aaron Johnson received his MFA from Hunter College, NY in 2005, and currently lives and works in Brooklyn. His work has been exhibited widely nationally and internationally at such venues as the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, NY; Gallery Poulsen, Copenhagen; Gallery Brandstrup, Oslo; The Running Horse Contemporary Art Space, Beirut; Leo Koenig Projekte, New York; Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York; and Marlborough Gallery, New York. Johnson's exhibitions have been reviewed in many publications including Art News, Beautiful Decay, Kunst International, The Art Newspaper, The Village Voice, and The New York Times. His work is in the permanent collections of The Weisman Foundation, Los Angeles and The Museum of Modern Art, New York. This is Johnson's second solo show at Stux Gallery and his fifth solo show in New York.

For further information please contact the gallery at Andrea@stuxgallery.com.