

Barnaby Whitfield

Ah For A Man to Arise in Me / That the Man I Am May Cease to Be

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 26, 6 – 8 PM
March 26 – May 2, 2009

STUX Gallery is delighted to announce *Ah, For a Man to Arise in Me / That the Man I am may cease to be*, a solo exhibition of new works by acclaimed pastel painter **Barnaby Whitfield**. This is **Whitfield's** first exhibition at Stux, and his fifth solo show in New York. The exhibition presents a new suite of pastel painting loaded with **Whitfield's** lushly grotesque figuration, ambiguous personal symbolism, and deeply human conundrums.

Whitfield's works are at once hopelessly romantic and urgently contemporary. His work simultaneously pulls inspiration from Rococo era portraiture and contemporary fashion advertising. He seamlessly weaves cleverly appropriated Old-Master quotations with images sifted spontaneously from internet sources. The result is works loaded with inside jokes that belong to our twenty-first century psyche. **Whitfield's** characters are rendered in gorgeously soft and dreamy pastel, their bodies glowing with eerie internal light, but perversely marred with sickly hues that allude to bruising, rotting, sweltering flesh. Something menacing seems to have a grip on these pastel beauties and the narrative clues are compellingly composed to allow the viewer partial access but ultimate suspense. The indecipherability of **Whitfield's** highly personal symbolism begins to breakdown as clues to the artist's appropriations surface, illuminating the development of his personal artistic vocabulary.

For this particular suite of pastel work, **Whitfield** digs intimately into his own personal narratives. He has placed his characters into a bizarre contextual universe of his uniquely singular imaging where women balloon out of scattered spermata, and the laws of the land are dictated by an unashamed phallocentrism. A bubbling, rainbow hued life force often emanates from behind to life the subject's presence, giving physicality to the artist's childlike fascination with love and horror. Within this constructed context, he questions his role as a contemporary artist, casting himself sometimes as the jester with a jealousy complex, and other times as "An Expiring European Honey-Bee". **Whitfield's** ouvre is rich with characters of his own unique invention, who reappear in the on-going saga of the work over years, such as Clonie, a clone of his mother, who appears in this suite to be possibly be gasping her last breath. The work is also ripe with allusions to other artists, from contemporaries like John Currin to Old Masters like Courbet. In fact the artist here delves into hairy territory by creating a version of Courbet's pivotal work *The Origin of the World*, where the model has been recasted as male and sourced from internet porn. This series of evocative new works demonstrate the artist's unflinchingly committed exploration of the paradox of the beautiful in ugliness.

Born in Miami, Florida, **Barnaby Whitfield** lives and works in New York, where he maintains a reputation as "a colorful character with a past that isn't so much checkered as it is striped or polka-dotted, or maybe something along the lines of a vintage toile" (*Anthem* magazine, 2008). **Whitfield's** work has received much attention through many exhibitions with 31 Grand Gallery, NY, and has been exhibited in many other venues, most recently including Robert Berman Gallery, in Santa Monica, CA. His work has been reviewed in numerous publications including *Anthem*, *Beautiful Decay*, and *Art in America*.

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

