

## ANCIENT & MODERN

### MELISSA GORDON: 'TWO-DIMENSIONAL MEN'

PREVIEW WEDNESDAY 2 SEPTEMBER, 6 – 8PM  
3 SEPTEMBER – 3 OCTOBER 2009

ANCIENT & MODERN presents new paintings and drawings by Melissa Gordon.

*Two-Dimensional Men* is Melissa Gordon's second solo exhibition at the gallery. Her installation arises from reference points dealing with populist images and socio-historical documents. Its title is a take on Herbert Marcuse's publication 'One-Dimensional Man' (1964) which examines the fundamental relationships in post-war society between capitalism, bureaucracy and communism, particularly with regards to increasing forms of social repression and excessively material values.

Gordon seeks not simply to present found images or source material, but to re-present, recontextualize and create new angles and critiques regarding the cultural circulation and function of objects and ideas over time.

In a series of new paintings, magnified details of Norman Rockwell illustrations are presented alongside similarly enlarged, familiar textile patterns. Rockwell was an American illustrator particularly best known for his covers of the Saturday Evening Post, portraying and perpetuating a wholesome American vernacular of Post-War middle-class values about work, family, and leisure.

Extracted from their original context and blown-up so that they dissolve into the rosetta pattern of the CMYK colour-printing matrix, the Rockwell details become difficult to decipher as images, although not entirely unidentifiable as references. The bracketed titles of the works - (*After 'The Fugitive'*) and (*After 'The Flirt'*) - hint at the individual piece each may hold in a larger puzzle.

The 'fabric' paintings on coarse linen of pinstripe, houndstooth and plaid are strong traditional identifiers of particular types of individuals and characters: a banker, an intellectual, a farmer. Gordon is particularly interested in the socio-cultural construction of character and gender

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identity. As the Rockwell details dissolve in magnified detail, the fabric paintings accompanying them seem to unravel - their signifying properties destabilized, exposed as empty or arbitrary creations.

*Two-Dimensional Men* also includes a series of 'word drawings' referencing a different yet closely related document of 1950's Americana. The words Gordon uses are taken from *The Lonely Crowd* (David Riesman, 1950), a sociological study that identifies and analyses three main cultural types, each corresponding loosely to a different phase of modern man's character development: from tradition-directed, to inner-directed and finally outer-directed; what one might recognize as the dominant contemporary middle-class personality type.

In her drawings, Gordon animates and problematizes such seemingly clear-cut definitions of identity and character. Extending and overlapping in and out of each other, the texts are hand-drawn in different classic fonts, and confound each other both literally and metaphorically: they are visually obscured and complicated in surface level reading, as well as confused in deeper meaning and association. Art works, like histories and identities, are revealed to be particularly human constructions.

Melissa Gordon (b. Boston MA, 1981) studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, Cooper Union, New York, and at De Ateliers in Amsterdam. Previous solo exhibitions have been at Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf and Galerie Juliette Jongma, Amsterdam (2006 and 2008). In 2006 she was recipient of the prestigious Koninklijke Prijs voor Vrije Schilderkunst and in 2007 the ABN AMRO Kunstprijs. Gordon recently completed the Artist-in-Residence program at Wiels Contemporary Art Centre in Brussels, the city in which she continues to reside. Her exhibition at Ancient & Modern is followed by her first solo presentation in New York at Marianne Boesky's Project Space commencing 10 September 2009.

Exhibition open Thursdays - Saturdays, 12 - 6pm and by appointment

For more information please contact Bruce or Emily at the gallery on [mail@ancientandmodern.org](mailto:mail@ancientandmodern.org)