

SKARSTEDT

Cindy Sherman and David Salle: History Portraits and Tapestry Paintings

1st October – 26th November

Skarstedt is delighted to announce the opening of a new London gallery at 8 Bennet Street, St James's. A joint exhibition of Cindy Sherman's *History Portraits* (1988 – 1990) and David Salle's *Tapestry Paintings* (1989 – 1991) inaugurates the new space. Dominant figures in contemporary art, both Cindy Sherman and David Salle were key figures in the influential 'Pictures Generation' art movement of the mid 1970s and 80s in New York.

Emerging onto the art scene during this media-dominated era, both Sherman and Salle, like many of their contemporaries, drew upon existing imagery as inspiration for their own richly layered work.



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #216*, 1989



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #203*, 1989



David Salle, *Young Krainer*, 1989



David Salle, *Backdrop*, 1990

First exhibited in London at Waddington Galleries in 1989, with the second series being shown at Fred Hoffman Gallery, Los Angeles in 1990 and Gagosian Gallery, New York in 1991, David Salle's *Tapestry Paintings* are a pastiche on sixteenth and seventeenth-century Italian and Dutch genre styles. The background imagery is drawn from narrative scenes from historical tapestries, some of which are reproductions of famous works, others are by an anonymous Russian tapestry-maker which Salle found reproduced in a magazine and copied onto canvas. Demonstrating a richness of imagery and compositional complexity, this body of work is one of Salle's most accomplished. A select number of *Tapestry Paintings* were included in the touring retrospective of Salle's work, which originated at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 1999, though paintings from this pivotal series have not been widely exhibited since.

Presented on a grand scale, in a nod to the monumental proportions of historical tapestries, the *Tapestry Paintings* eschew the narrative tendencies of their source material, demonstrating instead a simultaneity of styles. Delicately tinted, the pale backgrounds are deliberately rococo, with smaller grisaille paintings and coloured motifs inset into the canvas. The multi-layered images are instilled with rhythm and velocity, which the eye distills as it zooms in and out of focus over the surface.

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In this unique body of work, Salle neutralizes narrative conventions, instead creating a dialogue between art historical references and genres through his incorporation of decorative imagery of furniture, painted images of African masks and Giacometti sculptures, among others. Alive with colliding imagery, the visual cacophony of the *Tapestry Paintings* emphasizes the primacy of seeing.

Also overt in their stylistic references, Cindy Sherman's *History Portraits* take their inspiration from noble historical paintings from the renaissance, baroque, rococo and neo-classical periods. Inspired directly by painted portraits by Raphael, Caravaggio, Ingres and Rubens among others, Sherman uses a range of props and costumes in her classically composed images to play up to the clichés of subjective portraiture. Exploring the traditional genre of painting with a multi-layered approach both physically and conceptually, the heavy draped fabrics that form the backdrops of the *History Portraits* and the rich, dense coloration of the photographic surface give physical form to Sherman's appropriation of this historical genre.

Throughout her extensive body of work, Sherman has assumed the role of both model and creator of her images. Adopting different styles and personas, she plays upon the stereotypes of women as portrayed in art and propagated in the media. Through her use of props and obvious prosthetic body parts, Sherman draws attention to the performative aspects of her work, thereby calling into question the validity of these male-attributed gender stereotypes.

Invited to collaborate with the French porcelain house Limoges, Sherman made several images, notably *Untitled #183*, 1988, loosely based on Madame de Pompadour. Continuing with her research of characters, Sherman created the *Citoyennes*, *Citoyens* series, exhibited in Paris in 1989 for the anniversary of the French Revolution. Expanding this theme during a prolonged stay in Rome, Sherman made thirteen portraits based on Renaissance paintings which were exhibited alongside the French series at Metro Pictures, New York in 1990. Sherman eventually made a third series of history portraits drawing inspiration largely from the Renaissance and the seventeenth century.

Evoking the art of painting, Sherman's re-interpretations are full of theatricality and artifice, calling into question the nature of representation throughout art history and the relationship between painter and model. Intrinsic to each of Sherman's portraits are their ornate gilded frames, which she designed to emphasize the painterly references in each of the works. The glossy surface and saturated colours of these photographs bring to the fore the artificiality of Sherman's composition, heightening the theatricality of the performance encased within the frame.

The theme of performance is also central to Salle's oeuvre. With a long-standing involvement in theatre, Salle has collaborated for over 25 years with choreographer Karole Armitage, creating sets and costumes for her ballets and operas. Pre-dating his seminal *Ghost Paintings* of 1992, which merge painting, photography and performance, the *Tapestry Paintings* demonstrate the cross-cultural performative influences on Salle's work through the incorporation of insert paintings of dancers and photo-transfer images of his own staged photographs. With their juxtaposition of imagery and cultural references, these large-scale paintings are choreographed performances in their own right, their surface a stage for Salle's ongoing exploration of the performative nature of painting.

Positioning these bodies of work in dialogue, the exhibition explores the shared visual strategies and the performative aspects intrinsic to the artists' work. Created during the same period, the *History Portraits* and *Tapestry Paintings* invite us to reflect on the coincidence of the artists' shared translation of historical sources at this particular moment of contemporary art history and to contemplate the role played by their chosen mediums of painting and photography. The borrowing by Sherman and Salle of visual modes and styles to create a layered pastiche that is original and inventive underlines the success of their artistry, and the continued importance of these historical bodies of work as context for contemporary thought and practice.

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About the artists:

Cindy Sherman was born in Glen Ridge, New Jersey in 1954. Upon graduating from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1976, Sherman relocated to New York City where she began making the seminal *Untitled Film Stills*. Since the early stages of her career, Sherman has focused on photography as her principal means of expression. Widely known for her self-reflexive photographs and films, Sherman's portrayal of a variety of female characters offers insight into the construction of identity and challenges gender stereotypes that confine women's role within society and culture.

Cindy Sherman has had solo exhibitions worldwide at institutions including: The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2012); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2012); Dallas Museum of Art (2012); Sammlung Verbund, Vertikale Galerie, Vienna (2012); Centre de la photographie, Geneva (2012); Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2007); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen (2007); Kunsthauus Bregenz, Austria (2006/07); Jeu de Paume, Paris (2006); Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover, Germany (2004); Serpentine Gallery, London (2003); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1997); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1997); Museum of Modern Art, New York (1997); Museum Boijmans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam (1996); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (1996) and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1987).

Sherman has most recently participated in major group shows and biennials including: *Bad Thoughts: Collection of Martijn and Jeanette Sanders*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2014); *Urban Theater: New York Art in the 1980s*, The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas (2014); *Paparazzi! Photographers, Stars, and Artists*, Centre Pompidou Paris; Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt; Musée de l'Éysee, Lausanne (2015); *The Encyclopedic Palace* 55th Venice Biennial (2013); *NYC 1993! Experimental Jet Set, Trash, and No Star*, New Museum, New York (2013); *A Bigger Splash: Painting After Performance*, Tate Modern, London (2012); *Regarding Warhol: Sixty Artists, Fifty Years*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2012); *ILLUMInations*, 54th Venice Biennale (2011); *10,000 Lives*, Gwangju Biennale, South Korea (2010) and *The Pictures Generation: 1974-1984*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2009).

Solo exhibitions of Cindy Sherman's works took place recently at The Broad, Los Angeles and The Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.

David Salle was born in 1952 in Norman, Oklahoma. In 1970, he began his studies at the newly founded California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, where he worked with John Baldessari. After earning a BFA in 1973 and an MFA in 1975, both from CalArts, Salle moved to New York, where he has lived since.

A central figure in the re-establishment of painting in the 1980s, David Salle's rich painterly language is inspired by existing imagery, drawn largely from art history, advertisements, design and everyday culture. Although known primarily as a painter, Salle's work is inspired by his long-standing involvement with performance, which is often directly referenced in his paintings by the insertion of photographic excerpts documenting a live performance, such as the *Ghost Paintings*, 1992. Synthesizing various styles and cultural references, Salle's visual language demonstrates an energy and freedom that characterise his singular aesthetic.

Following his first solo museum exhibition at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam in 1983, Salle's paintings have been shown in museums and galleries worldwide. Solo exhibitions of his work have been held at the Whitney Museum, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; MoMA Vienna; Menil Collection; Houston, Haus der Kunst, Munich; Tel Aviv Museum of Art; Castello di Rivoli, Turin; the Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover, and the Guggenheim Bilbao. He has participated in major international expositions including Documenta 7 (1982), Venice Biennale (1982 and 1993), Whitney Biennial (1983, 1985, and 1991), Paris Biennale (1985), and Carnegie International (1985).

David Salle's early paintings are currently on view alongside contemporaries Eric Fischl and Ross Bleckner at the Parrish Museum of Art, Watermill New York until October 16. A solo exhibition of his paintings from 1992 to the present day is also currently on view at CAC Malaga – his first Spanish show in 16 years. His paintings will be included in the forthcoming exhibition *Painters' Painters* at the Saatchi Gallery, London from 16 November 2016 - 28 February 2017.

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A prolific writer on art, David Salle's collected essays have been published in a book titled *How to See* which is just off the press. There will be book signings in the US this autumn.

About Skarstedt London:

Located at 8 Bennet Street, Skarstedt's new London gallery is situated in the historic district of St James's, on the corner of Arlington Street and Bennet Street, both named after Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington (1618 – 1685). Known as 'ministerial street' in the 17th and 18th centuries, the street was previously home to Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole (1676 – 1745) and his son Horace Walpole (1717 – 1797), an esteemed collector and connoisseur. Adjacent to one of London's finest establishments, the Ritz Hotel, the gallery is in the heart of the historic concentration of galleries and auction houses, including Christie's. Formerly the Portland Gallery, the renovation has been realised by Thomas Croft of Thomas Croft Architects to be in keeping with the aesthetic of Skarstedt's existing spaces. Measuring 5,000 sq ft, with the main exhibition space at ground floor level, the three interconnected galleries enable Skarstedt to continue its programme of historically-researched and museum-quality exhibitions.

Skarstedt History:

Skarstedt was founded in 1994 by Per Skarstedt to mount historical exhibitions by contemporary European and American artists that had become the core of his specialty in Sweden and New York in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Skarstedt's programme focuses on museum-quality, historically researched exhibitions of works by artists particularly of the late Twentieth Century, who engage with concepts such as representation, authorship, identity, and sexual politics across a wide-range of media. The gallery's unique relationship with artists allows it to present exhibitions both on the primary and secondary markets, creating a dialogue between the generations.

Notes to editors

Exhibition: *Cindy Sherman and David Salle: History Portraits and Tapestry Paintings*

Location: Skarstedt, 8 Bennet St., St James's, London, SW1A 1RP

Telephone: +44 (0) 207 499 5200

Dates: 1st October - 26th November 2016

Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 10am - 6pm; Monday by appointment.

Admission is free

www.skarstedt.com

Please join the conversation with Skarstedt on Instagram (@SkarstedtGallery) via the hashtags: #CindySherman #DavidSalle #HistoryTapestry #SkarstedtLondon

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Image credits

Top L-R:

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #216*, 1989, chromogenic colour print in artist's frame, 95 x 64 in. (241.3 x 162.6 cm.) © Cindy Sherman.

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #203*, 1989, chromogenic colour print in artist's frame, 61 x 45 ¾ in. (154.9 x 116.2 cm.) © Cindy Sherman.

Bottom L-R:

David Salle, *Young Krainer*, 1989, acrylic and oil on canvas with two inserted panels, 84 x 104 ½ in. (213.4 x 265.4 cm.) Art © David Salle/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Courtesy of Skarstedt.

David Salle, *Backdrop*, 1990, oil and acrylic on canvas, 96 x 122 in. (243.8 x 309.9 cm.) Art © David Salle/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Courtesy of Skarstedt.