

Press Release

Victoria Miro Gallery

Tal R

Minus

13 May – 23 June 2006

Private View, Saturday 13 May, 6 – 8pm

The Victoria Miro Gallery presents *Minus*, an exhibition of new paintings and works on paper by Tal R. The Danish artist is best known for his exuberant and deceptively simple works, which transform a picture book naiveté into a darker, archaic and often violent world.

This is the third in a suite of four shows where the starting point has been a self-imposed restriction; a limited palette of murky black, white, mustard yellow, pillar box red, forest green, chocolate brown and bubblegum pink. The artist's choice of 'dirty', everyday colours deliberately puts him at one remove from the traditional 'pure' colours of painting. In the artist's words "(using) the same seven buckets of paint, keeps it simple" and permits him the freedom to focus on content, shape and form.

For the first time in his work the artist also introduces a border around the edge of his canvases, signifying a departure from the bold horizontal colour fields he is known for. The border references decorative patterns common to embroidery tapestry and illuminated manuscripts. It also refers to the margins in books where writers and poets often make mental notes connected to the central text. Formally, the border serves to contain and ground the central activity of the canvas with particular focus on the empty spaces – the 'minus' of the exhibition title.

The artist has described 'minus' as "the space where you enter the work" and has attributed to it a quality of generosity, a bold and open area that plays on our expectations of what is considered worthy within a work of art. For instance in the large scale painting *Stairs Afrique* the artist depicts the Spanish Steps in Rome. The Renaissance church at the top of the steps has been replaced with the abstracted, looming presence of a "black beast". The civilized has been supplanted by the primitive, while at the centre lies the open space of possibility - "minus".

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open Tuesday to Saturday
10am to 6pm, admission free
tubes, Old Street and Angel

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Keeping one foot within the parameters of the authoritative and distinctly 'masculine' discourse of abstract minimalism, Tal R nonetheless insists upon disruption of this discourse with his references to a 'feminine' world of craft and childlike abandon. A sense of incongruity prevails as these new paintings waver between masculine and feminine visual idioms; strength and fragility; darkness and optimism.

Background and Biography

Israel-born, Denmark-based artist Tal R belongs to the group of artists who graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in the 1990s. Common to this generation of painters is a focus on expressive and painterly qualities, which they combine with personal and sometimes banal stories. Tal R describes his painting style as 'Kolbojnik', the Hebrew word for leftovers. Shunning hierarchies and intellectualism the artist uses the idea of a visual dustbin as an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Everything can be and is shown, no subject is too dull, too revealing or too commonplace. This down-to-earth attitude characterises his work, which is chaotic, humorous and full of movement.

Tal R was born in 1967 in Tel Aviv, Israel, and lives in Copenhagen. In 1986-88, he studied at Billedeskolen in Copenhagen, and in 1994-2000 he was at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art in Copenhagen. He was a guest professor at Hochschule für bildende Künste in 2003 and the Academy of Fine Art in Helsinki in 2000. Recent solo exhibitions include *House of Prince* at Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin 2005 and Douglas Hyde Gallery, Ireland in 2004; *Mor*, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (with Jonathan Meese), 2005; *Lords of Kolbojnik*, Victoria Miro Gallery, 2003; *Ike og Ancher*, Horsens Kunstmuseum, Horsens, 2002; *Fruitland*, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach; *Lord Madras*, Hostrup-Perdersen & Johansen, Kopenhagen and *Live at Club Sombi*, Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin, 2001. His work has also been shown in many group exhibitions including: *Imagination Becomes Reality – Part 1: Expanded Paint Tools*, Sammlung Goetz, München, 2005 and *Huts* (curated by the artist), Douglas Hyde Gallery, Ireland, 2004. Tal R will have a solo exhibition at Louisiana Museum for Moderne Kunst, Denmark in 2007.

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