

Press Release

Victoria Miro Gallery

Hernan Bas

Saints & Secret Sects

2 June – 28 July 2007

Private View, Saturday 2 June, 6 – 8pm

Victoria Miro presents the second solo UK exhibition by young Miami-based painter Hernan Bas. Entitled *Saints & Secret Sects*, this new body of work furthers the artist's interest in figuring historical and mythological narratives within the imagery and iconography of popular culture, literature, queer culture and here, religious mysticism. This exhibition is presented as two parts – a second show will be on view at Galleria II Capricorno in Venice from 6 June 2007.

In these new paintings, Bas' characteristically lonesome, youthful figures are cast as various saints. In one scene, the Virgin Mary lactates on a boyish Saint Bernard, while Saint Francis, so often the subject of both historical and contemporary genre painting, receives the stigmata. Saint Ambrose is depicted fighting off a swarm of bees, and in another, a young shepherd is tempted away from his flock by shadowy, hooded figures.

In *Saints & Secret Sects* Bas alludes to the cultural preoccupation with the iconography of saints and aligns it with the supernatural. Bas' new-found curiosity in the "lives of saints" lies in the seemingly paranormal aspects of their legends. Taken as literature, the extreme nature of many of the tales can verge on the haunting apparitions of ghost stories, or visionary texts taken from modern new-age publications. That the faith of so many is based on such elaborate mythologies is what draws Bas to this imagery.

The atmospheric, otherworldly quality to the paintings and Bas' sumptuous treatment of surface evokes a lyricism that parallels the subjects' layered narratives. The artist proposes that the so-called 'cult of sainthood' is not so far removed from other, secular systems of belief such as those of secret societies, commenting that "the need to belong to something greater than one's self is the basis for the existence of both."

Hernan Bas, born in 1978, has in recent years become one of the most sought after young painters in the US, UK and Europe. Bas has had solo exhibitions at The Moore Space, Miami, The Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, Florida Daniel Reich Gallery, New York, and Fredric Snitzer Gallery, Miami. Bas' work has been included in *Ideal Worlds: New Romanticism in Contemporary Art* at the Schirn Kunsthalle, 2005 and the *2004 Whitney Biennial*, New York. His work is held in many public and private collections in the US, UK and Europe including MoCA, Los Angeles, Whitney Museum, New York, MoCA Miami, Hirschorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, Saatchi Collection, London and the Dakis Joannou Collection, Athens. This is his second solo exhibition at Victoria Miro.

Bryony McLennan
Press Officer
bryony@victoria-miro.com
0207 549 0490

Kathy Stephenson
Director of Communications
kathy@victoria-miro.com
0207 549 0422

Victoria Miro Gallery
16 Wharf Road
London N1 7RW
www.victoria-miro.com
open Tuesday to Saturday
10am to 6pm, admission free
tubes, Old Street and Angel