

Victoria Miro Gallery

Press Release

Hernan Bas In The Low Light

23 March to 23 April 2005, Upper Gallery
Private View 6.30pm to 8.30pm, Tuesday 22 March

“Sometimes it is so light. That hurts my eyes. And it’s too many lamps – little sparkles all over, up high, and large ones that are dreadful. They could fall on me, you know.” – Mark Twain, *Letters from the Earth*

Victoria Miro Gallery presents a new series of work by Miami-based artist Hernan Bas in his first solo exhibition in Europe. Titled *In the Low Light* this body of work subtly considers contradictions in perceptions of morality, addressing Bas’s own notion of ‘hell’. As the artist describes, “this is not the hell popularized by Dante or Bosch, but rather a vision of a territory that, even if dark at times, allows for a bit of light.”

For this series, Bas has worked with the idea that concepts of hell are very personal. Here, Bas takes as a point of reference the charged cultural climate of 1960s San Francisco, where a church was founded for which ‘hell’ actually meant ‘heaven’. To the members of the Church of Satan, hell consisted of absolute freedom and permitted a sense of abandon heaven would not allow. Hell was considered a place for artists and outcasts, a place to frolic, indulge and love whomever one wished, and offered a refuge from a perceived ‘purity’ of heaven. Out of a personal alignment to what is in certain circles considered ‘sinful’ behavior, Bas has produced works that illustrate his ‘hell’: a realm where darkness and light are not necessarily at odds with one another and there are no swift distinctions between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’.

Informed by historical painting and literature, Bas’s atmospheric works suggest a fluid, unpredictable time before dawn or at dusk, in which fantasies are played out through posturing or transformation. Decadent dandies, teenage waifs, languid loners and dashing adventurers are some of the characters that populate Bas’s ongoing narrative. His works resist a pinning down of time or place, with historical imagery layered with references to contemporary fashion and Bas’s invented mythology. Suspenseful and infused with a sense of longing, the works explore implications of love, desire and queer culture through a dreamlike romanticism and wistful nostalgia.

Hernan Bas, born in 1978, is a recent graduate of the increasingly influential New World School of the Arts in Miami, and is part of the burgeoning Miami art scene. His work will be featured in *Ideal Worlds: New Romanticism in Contemporary Art* at the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt from 12 May – 28 August 2005. Bas was first shown at Victoria Miro Gallery in the exhibition *Painting 2004*. He was featured in the *2004 Whitney Biennial* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and has had solo exhibitions at The Moore Space, Miami, Daniel Reich Gallery, New York, Fredric Snitzer Gallery, Miami, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, Florida.

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