

KANTOR / FEUER GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition dates: May 20 – June 24, 2006

Opening reception: May 20, 6-9pm

TOM MCGRATH

"Pigeon Forge, Gatlinburg, Sprinkler City Blues"

Kantor / Feuer Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings by New York based artist Tom McGrath. These latest paintings by McGrath are part of his ongoing attempt at capturing the landscape that exists in the absence of idyllic nature, addressing the genre through its most marginal and unnatural surfaces. As an artist working in New York, McGrath takes the idea of the pedestrian observer and the tradition of plein air painting and transforms these vantage points by taking them to the off ramp on the interstate. Playing with the utmost familiarity of situations in landscapes, drawing analogies and passages between speed and atmosphere, landscape surfaces and out-scaled urbanisms, McGrath creates paintings that subtly disrupt their viewers' larger sense of place in a peripheral but focused light.

In "The Dry Strip" and "Striped Shirt" McGrath loosely refers to the rural township theme-parks of Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge, Tennessee towns in a county best known for Dollywood tourism. These works are ghost moments, made from shifty, indeterminate glimpses of clouds, a striped shirt, a road barrier, and light pollution into the Smoky Mountains. No tourist moment is seen here.

"(Monkeybar painting)", though inspired by a scene from Hitchcock's "The Birds", rejects a filmic narrative by restaging it without its starring players. McGrath plays with the nostalgic codes of an abandoned playground, and emotively mannered ideas about painting, by using techniques that are derived from the optically complex and spatially challenging vocabulary evoking impressionist atmosphere set into surrealist methods of image construction. A similar sensibility is conveyed in "Sprinkler City", a pedestrian variation on a spooky but generic house whose details come together to create a disjunctive scenario; McGrath pitches the distorted, candy-colored, man-made objects and lawn against the dense cluster of birch trees and a haplessly skewed real estate sign.

"...tons of a barrelin'..." is based off a 30 second video taken from the blind spot of a fuel tanker barreling down a Tennessee highway, which McGrath broke into stills to create a "real time" extension of the image. In this painting, one can never quite figure out where the limits of the interior and exterior lay, or where exactly one's focus should stop and start. The syrupy tones and the truck's apparent jackknifing heighten this sense of shifting distraction, prolonging a moment-of-recognition into an unresolved gaze.

The marks on McGrath's paintings' surfaces break free from specific experience and suggest different collapsed visual phenomena- the corner of a landscape left by a windshield wiper, the splash of elements over images. Rather than relaying a feeling of disorientation from image distortion or painterly virtuosity, this manipulation of the both the expected and the unfamiliar is meant to tease out contradictory notions about landscape and sense of place.

Tom McGrath was born in New Milford, CT, in 1978. He received his BFA from Cooper Union in 2000 and his MFA from Columbia University in 2002. He has had solo exhibitions at Zach Feuer Gallery (LFL), New York [2]; and Lia Rumma, Naples, Italy; His work has been in group exhibitions recently at Inman Gallery, Houston; Lia Rumma, Milan; the Orlando Museum of Art and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, NY. He lives and works in New York City.

In the Project room **Claude Collins-Stracensky** will show a group of images and objects that deal with the mediation of emotional experience through material and form. Working from where formalism

opens onto an emotional understanding of material and space, Collins-Stracensky explores the shared human experience of sex. The sculpture, "Untitled (sex)," channels the emotional and transcendental experience of sex. Its foundation stems from a formalism like Ikebana and a minimal spiritualism like the spaces built by Donald in Marfa or Jorge Oteiza's investigations in finding spirit in constructed form.

Collins-Stracensky draws also from the traditions of assemblage, like Rauschenberg's Combines, and the found object as a way to link personal kinesthetic understandings of how we navigate the space around us.

Born in 1975 in Lakewood Ohio, Collins-Stracensky studied in Cleveland, New York and San Francisco before moving to Los Angeles in 1999. He received his MFA from the University of Southern California in 2003. He had a solo exhibition at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) and has appeared in various group shows in New York and Los Angeles.

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Tuesday - Saturday 10 - 6 pm