

Lucy Skaer
"Blanks and Ballast"
16th April – 28th May 2011

The Galerie Nelson-Freeman is pleased to present British artist Lucy Skaer's first solo exhibition in France.

In recent years Lucy Skaer has developed a diverse body of work that includes large-scale drawing and print making, sculpture, and film. Her exhibitions have often crafted installations combining all of these mediums, installations in which each individual work explores a different aspect of a working method in which objects and images, at once familiar and abstract, are transformed by scale, repetition, manipulation, and insertions of Skaer's own vocabulary of basic geometric form. All these seemingly varied works question the way we lend meaning to the things we think we know: newspaper images of familiar masterpieces enlarged and overdrawn; clips from early cinema manipulated to the point of abstraction; objects cut apart and reconfigured; familiar domestic objects turned into prints of their forms. In all of these manipulations the artist introduces to the familiar a loss of bearing, and a distortion of meaning even as the objects that result are obviously both beautiful and secure in their own new meaning.

For her first exhibition at the gallery, Skaer has made a number of installations of entirely new work.

Included will be a series of works on paper: two large screen prints of Paolo Uccello's *Battle of San Romano* (National Gallery, London), in which the source image, taken from a small newspaper reproduction, has been blown up to about the actual work's real size. The prints divide the reproduction into its component colours of CMYK, and introduce another series of gestural and geometric marks which correspond to sculptural elements in the room (some of which are made from ancient oak, contemporary with the painting), creating a playful restaging of the stylised battle in situ.

In another series, *Blanks Toward Harlequin*, blocks of color are overlaid on monumental color photographic prints of lines of Renaissance paintings from the National Gallery in each of which Skaer has removed the figure to leave only the original monochrome background and an empty silhouette. The effect is to have created almost a running landscape out of a history of portraiture, in which there is a tension between two systems of monochrome geometries, one abstract as Skaer introduced it, and the other still with its ghost of representation. The introduction of the Harlequin pattern in this series reveals Skaer's interest in the figure of the fool or jester, as an agent of the chaotic, utopian and nonsensical. As is often found in Skaer's work, these large works stretch ones understanding of the familiar and tie it to what we might expect from art as we think we know it, but skewing both to create a work that questions both assumptions while proposing a satisfying new whole.

The installation *Renegociate* will combine a film with sculpture: Skaer's reduction of the important early silent film *Borderline* (1930, made by the Pool Group—H.D. [the poet Hilda Doolittle], the film maker Kenneth Macpherson and the novelist Bryher [Annie Winifred Ellerman]) to an extended scene of particular tension between two of the film's characters, into which Skaer has physically introduced a hovering and shifting abstract shape by clipping a shaped hole to each frame with a trainman's ticket punch. Together with the film are sculptures of extruded glass replicating the same shape as the punch used in the film, a cycling loop questioning our perception of shape, reproduction, sequence, narrative and sense.

Also included in the show will be new works in bronze, cut directly from ingots which would more normally be the raw material for casting. Titled *Fool's Ingots*, they allude to the *Ballast* of the show's title and to the allegory of the *Ship of Fools*, a company of dreamers and simpletons cast off from the more rational shores in search of Narragonia, the fool's utopia.

Lucy Skaer was born in Cambridge, England in 1975. She earned her degree at the Glasgow School of Art, and in recent years has developed a considerable international reputation. In 2007, Skaer was one of six artists chosen to represent Scotland at the Venice Biennale, and in 2009 was nominated for the Turner Prize. Solo exhibitions have included the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, and the Chisenhale Gallery in London, both in 2008, and the Kunsthalle in Basel in 2009. She will have an exhibition at the Sculpture Center in New York in 2012. The artist now lives and works in New York.