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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

James Rosenquist

A Pale Angel's Halo and Slipping Off The Continental Divide

October 1, 2013 – January 10, 2014



Above: *A Pale Angel's Halo* and *Slipping off the Continental Divide*, both 1973, acrylic on canvas, with marker on Tergal; oil and acrylic on canvas, 9 feet 5 inches by 9 feet 1/8 inches and 8 feet 6-1/2 inches by 21 feet 11-1/8 inches

Richard L. Feigen & Co. is unveiling one of the iconic masterpieces of Post-War American painting, James Rosenquist's *A Pale Angel's Halo* and *Slipping off the Continental Divide*. Rosenquist made this signature, monumental painting in 1973, nine years after completing his famous composition, *F-111* (1964), a milestone in the history of Post-War art, and can properly be put in a category of historic Rosenquist works along side of it.

In *A Pale Angel's Halo* and *Slipping off the Continental Divide*, Rosenquist transforms his personal experience of life into a universal message explains Judith Goldman: "He found his visual language in parts of ordinary things...The private references function merely as points of departure...They are the elements out of which he forms modern pictures." In this painting the hard, industrial edge of a car frame becomes the bridge to a mystical place – it is the lens through which Rosenquist would then view the world after his near fatal car crash in 1971.

By 1963 Rosenquist had become celebrated for his provocative technique of making startling juxtapositions of Pop imagery. In *Slipping off the Continental Divide* he slams incongruous images against each other– a chrome car window frames for the viewer (outside) a mysteriously suspended section of a wooden staircase and is pushed against the image of a gigantic open book with glowing pages suspended like a flying saucer. The book seemingly dumps multicolored confetti and a large triangle, circle and square emblazoned with Chinese characters.

After the '71 car accident, Rosenquist recounted the sense of fragmentation and flurries of color that rushed through his mind in that moment, and these elements certainly lurk in the background of this work. The pail handle doubles as a halo above a fluttering sheet of tergal. The process Rosenquist used to create the wrinkled, neon-colored rainbows behind the staircase and the angel's 'halo' – crumpling canvas, spraying it, and stretching it back out – parallels his own experience of being crushed in the collision and emerging out the other side.

Rosenquist was born in North Dakota near the Continental Divide and has said, in his 2009 biography *Painting Below Zero: Notes on a Life in Art*, that this work is “a metaphor for my past life and my future: yesterday, today, and tomorrow...One way or another, you leave your home, you slip off the Continental Divide, which goes east or west...This painting was like saying good-bye to my past.”

Rosenquist, whose tremendous influence on subsequent generations (Salle, Koons etc.) remains to be chronicled in full, can be seen in "Slipping" characteristically meshing Pop and personal imagery forming a significant part of the rich iconography which he continues to develop over the next 40 years. *A Pale Angel's Halo* and *Slipping off the Continental Divide* is monumental is not just size but importance in Rosenquist's career - the very crucible in which he connects his distant and recent traumatic past to the present and points the way to his fertile future. The exhibition, on view from October 1, 2013 to January 10, 2014, will include 4 historic paintings from 1984-93, collage studies, and a selection of monoprints and lithographs.