

“PACING LIKE A TIGER”

DAVINA SEMO

25 FEBRUARY – 31 MARCH 2012

Opening reception: Saturday 25 February, 17.00 – 19.30 hrs.

Galerie Gabriel Rolt is delighted to announce the first exhibition in the Netherlands by the young American artist Davina Semo. ‘PACING LIKE A TIGER’ presents an entirely new body of work. Semo’s sculptures combine brutality with beauty, describing a psychological landscape that is both dangerous and intoxicating.

Semo has attracted considerable attention for the physicality of her works. Using such materials as one-way mirrors, chains, safety glass, reinforced concrete and spray paint, her works reference a post-industrial world that is disquieting yet incontrovertible. Her sculptures offer, as the critic Bob Nickas has pointed out, ‘a distanced and implied violence’, whilst also being ‘capable of pure poetic gesture.’

For all the impersonal nature of their materials, Semo’s works address the human condition. Her titles — fragments from a heterogeneous pool of literature and conversation — imbue the sculptures with enigmatic narrative, speaking in a variety of idioms, yet always with a capitalised detachment. Their different voices prevent their messages — WELL I TALK ONE WAY, BUT I’M REALLY, UNDERNEATH, THE SAME KIND OF MANIAC THAT YOU ARE (2011); or LONG STRETCHES OF INTOLERABLE BOREDOM PUNCTUATED BY SMALL CRISES OF DISGUST (2011) for instance — from seeming to reflect Semo’s own state of mind, instead implying a pandemic hysteria from which she is distanced enough to transform into humour. They recall the titles of Roy Lichtenstein and have Pop Art’s ability to talk directly to people, yet they are applied not to comic-like images but to aggressively abstract forms, thus radically differing in tenor.

Recurring motifs crisscross Semo’s works. An ‘X’ emblazons and diagonally divides large square sculptures, morphing into the diamonds of grated fencing and chains whose steel loops convey, according to the artist, ‘a filthy strength.’ The diamond patterns refer back to earlier works by Semo in which the shape appeared centrally in figurative compositions, suggesting a void that offers escape from one world into another; a hole whose mysticism has a strongly sexual dimension. Simultaneously conveying both crudeness with transcendence, combining physicality with verbal communication, Semo’s works ultimately reveal the limits of personal connection: ‘I keep coming back to thinking about how strange it is to be alive,’ she explains, ‘and how in this time of total connection there is so little attention paid to the fundamental or metaphysical reality in which we exist, which is that there is no way for you to read my mind, and no way for me to read yours.’

Davina Semo was born in Washington D.C. in 1981 and studied Visual Arts at Brown University followed by an MFA at University of California, San Diego. Her solo exhibitions include ‘WE BEGIN WITH THE NOISE’, Martos Gallery, New York and ‘BEFORE SHIFTING TO THE BLACKNESS’, Rawson Projects, Brooklyn, New York (both 2011). Recent group exhibitions include “The 2011 Bridgehampton Biennial”, Martos Gallery, Bridgehampton; ‘We Regret To Inform You There Is Currently No Space Or Place For Abstract Painting’, Martos Gallery, New York; and ‘Borderline’, Pablo’s Birthday Gallery (all 2011). She lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

GALERIE GABRIEL ROLT

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NOTE TO THE EDITOR: Illustrations and more information can be requested from Rhiannon Pickles on +31 (0) 6158 21202 or through at rhiannonpickles@mac.com