

MARC JANCOU  
CONTEMPORARY



*Populaire 5*, 2011, pencil on paper, 33.07 x 23.39 in, 84 x 59.4 cm

Slawomir Elsner  
*Collecting Images*  
June 7 - July 29  
Opening Reception: June 7, 6-8pm

Marc Jancou Contemporary is pleased to announce *Collecting Images*, an exhibition featuring new works by Berlin-based artist Slawomir Elsner. *Collecting Images*, the artist's second show with the gallery, will run from June 7 through July 29.

In his new body of drawings, *Populaire*, Elsner uses a nostalgic vision of 1970s pornographic imagery to explore modern notions of art creation, as well as the fleeting nature of contemporary experience. Expertly rendered in jewel-like tones almost compulsively applied in so many minute strokes, the wholeness of these compositions is deliberately disrupted by the artist's performative gesture. Indeed, once finished with a drawing, the artist tacks it to a wall and then rips away the center, leaving only small corner sections. The final product is simply the suggestion of the original; the traces of the physical gesture become the overall gesture itself.

Presented in the mausolean casing of the frame, these works appear to exist as archeological remnants of a bygone era, before the socio-political repercussions of the sexual revolution would render its initial innocence obsolete. Profoundly, through his aggressive gesture, Elsner denies the viewer the whole image, and yet presents him with something more: the initial frustration presented by the loss and denial of the full composition, and then the possibilities of the imagination, whose depths are both infinite, and fearsome. These works thus become dream-like remnants cut from a fabricated collective memory.

Elsner's new paintings work toward a similar endeavor: denying the image, disrupting the picture plane, disabling the viewer's immediate gaze, and thereby activating his cerebral power. Just as the *Populaire* drawings are physically obstructed by a gestural movement in time, so these paintings are similarly covered in time's symbolic haze. Inspired by the bittersweet wistfulness of Hans Christian Andersen's mid-19<sup>th</sup> century tales and their Proustian interest in memory and its triggers, these paintings aim to visually realize the ineffable effects of time and the evocative beauty of the banal. Classical frescoes peek out from beneath the morbid beauty of painted decay, the vista of a former capital lies fractured in stacked tiles, and the power of the past is put forth.

Characteristic of Elsner's *oeuvre*, then, these new works activate the space between collective memory and subjective existence by re-envisioning familiar narratives. Poetically coupling the sensual artifice of 1970s pornography with the antique romance of Andersen, Elsner dynamically explores the ephemeral nature of existence and the limits of representation.

Slawomir Elsner was born in Wodzislaw, Poland in 1976. From 1995 to 2002, Elsner studied at the Academy of Fine Arts, Kassel. Since then, he has exhibited widely throughout Europe, at museums and galleries alike, and his work can be found in esteemed private collections both here and abroad. Recently, the artist was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Polish Institute, Berlin, *Paris - Berlin - Warszawa*, and was included in a group exhibition at the Museum Folkwang, Essen honoring recipients of the prestigious Kunsthauus Essen scholarship since 1998. Revered as one of the foremost Polish contemporary artists, Elsner's work is also included in a Hatje Cantz recent publication, *Polish!*, a survey of Polish artists working today.

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