

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

For immediate release: September 24, 2001

NANCY CHUNN: NEWS STORIES

OCTOBER 13 – NOVEMBER 10

Nancy Chunn will exhibit six large-scale paintings, based on world events and the power of the media. The paintings depict news-breaking stories from 1998 – 2000, including the Clinton scandal, the Turkish earthquake, the war in Kosovo, the Star Wars movie sequel (*The Phantom Menace*), and many others. Colorful and with an accumulation of detail, the paintings convey controlled chaos through visual metaphor and snappy slogans. Chunn creates a commentary that covers a range of emotion in reaction to the simultaneous coverage of the harrowing and the banal -- outrage, cynicism, laughter, grief, and disbelief. She registers the shock of each new horror as history repeats itself in a seemingly endless escalation of the unfathomable. Her recent paintings seem prescient today.

Chunn has invented a form of history painting for our time, depicting real events by indirection. She uses symbol, signage, and mapping strategies to advance the narrative. Related to the authority and directness of rubber stamps, the images convey meaning -- quickly and universally. Reoccurring motifs mirror the repetition of the news: dollar bills, coffins, and numbers represent corruption, death, and the astronomical. The slogan, "As Seen on TV," and a cartoon eye identify the culture of which we are a part and the fact that we bear witness, almost as voyeurs. Included less often are yellow smile faces that celebrate good news. Color is referential: a purple-blue suggests a collective bruise; a robin egg's blue contrasts dark deeds that occur in bright sunshine. Road maps serve as compositional grids and relate to the location of the events.

Four paintings are structured around the seasons: *Scandal (Winter 1998-1999)* references the sleaziness of Clinton's late presidency. *Spring Cleaning 1999* "covers" three stories: the war in Kosovo, Columbine, and the Star Wars sequel. *All Fall Down (Summer 1999)* has three sections: Giotto-like angels poignantly evoke John Kennedy, Jr's plane crash; crumbling buildings represent the Turkish earthquake, and female pictographs refer to the US Women's Soccer Team World Cup victory. *Huff 'n' Puff (Fall 1999)* combines six events: the WTO Seattle protest, West Nile Virus, Mayor Guiliani and the *Sensation* exhibition, Hurricane Floyd, Y2K scare, and, coming in from the bottom corner, little Elián, paddling an inner tube. The subjects of the two other paintings include a portrait of Princess Di and the election of 2000, the most recent painting to date.

The paintings develop directly from Chunn's widely popular, yearlong project, *Front Pages*, in which she superimposed images and text on every front page of the 1996 edition of *The New York Times*. David Frankel of *Artforum* has described the project as "ceaselessly inventive....the work as a whole has the effect of a Joycean stream of consciousness...like being inside a mind as it copes with quotidian public life." Two earlier series of paintings depict countries in political turmoil and Chinese history, using mapping systems and imagery that derive from these cultures.

Nancy Chunn is a two-time recipient of the National Endowment of the Arts Fellowship. *Front Pages* is published in book form by Rizzoli (New York: 1997) and was exhibited at the Corcoran Museum of Art, Washington, DC in 1998.

Reception: Saturday, October 13 from 6 – 8. Gallery hours: Tuesday – Saturday 10:00 – 6:00: Monday by appointment. For information, contact Amy Bannon at (212) 226-3232 or amy@feldmangallery.com.