

CAMERON HAYES

January 6 – February 17, 2018

Ronald Feldman Gallery will exhibit a series of figurative paintings by the Australian artist, Cameron Hayes, for his fourth exhibition at the gallery. The paintings evoke the phantasmagoric worlds of Bruegel, but his scenes address the contemporary world. The paintings, some as large as 6' x 8', are visually complex, depicting groups of manic figures in absurd scenarios. Hayes' vision of the human condition is comic and bleak, yet laced with poignance. The detailed paintings reward a close reading.

Each painting is accompanied by a short text.

Featured in the exhibition is ***Martina Navratilova versus Chris Evert*** (2014), which takes as its subject women's tennis during its early history. The text dissects the role of fathers as coaches, the poverty of the times, and the short lived fairy-tale success of young athletes. The composition depicts a glowing tennis court surrounded by darkness. The painting was awarded the prestigious Sir John Sulman Prize in 2014.

Elmyr de Hory, Fernand Legros and Real Lessard in the Republic of Poyais in 1969 (2015) conflates two historic scams: forged paintings that landed in the collections of museums and galleries in the '60s, "proving that the fine art world is as brand gullible as teenage-shoppers" as stated in the artist's accompanying text; and the creation of a fictional tourist destination in Latin America to lure investors during the 1800's – considered to be one of the most brazen confidence tricks in history. Scams bloom eternal.

Man ½ sleeping, ½ masturbating ½ dying, crn. Dr V.B. Gandhi Marg and Mahatma Gandhi Rd. (2017) is inspired by the artist's travels. The painting depicts a man dying on the street in Calcutta, trying to get the last bit of pleasure out of his body. Bollywood movie posters, each including an image of the man, are depicted on the walls behind him. A compassionate text accompanies the painting: "We can forget how much of their lives the poor can spend daydreaming."

Referencing the expulsion of man from Eden in *Milton's Paradise Lost*, ***People are Maps*** (2017) postulates that as humans evolved they lost their ability to empathize - causing their brains to shrink and their self-assertion to rise and morph into conflict. Detailed scenes of mayhem cover the canvas: car crashes, crumbling aerial highways, violent shoppers, and animals eating other animals. With ***When you lie you lose a bit of yourself and replace it with a bit of everyone else*** (2016), we encounter preposterous visual metaphors: people who lie are depicted as scarecrows or, in other images, as chopped up body parts.

Hayes lived for two years in the Aboriginal community of Millikapiti on Melville Island off the Northern-most coast of Australia. His work there subsequently became the subject of controversy. *The Incomplete History of the Millikapiti* was first exhibited at the Feldman Gallery in 2008. Its second exhibition in Australia in 2012 was cancelled in the face of the Aboriginal community's objections to the artist's depictions of their community. Subsequently, the Melbourne based gallery, Dark Horse Experiment, agreed to hold the controversial show which was accompanied by their public statement: "Hayes uses his experiences as a metaphor for universal themes: The displacement of the young, the old, alternative cultures, values, anything that contravenes the structure and value of the dominant society becomes casualties along the way."

Opening Reception: Saturday, January 6, 6-8. Gallery Hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10-6. Monday by appointment. For more information: contact Megan Paetzhold (212) 226-3232 or megan@feldmangallery.com.

Press Link: <http://bit.ly/2ChpMr0>