

Terry Rodgers: Spellbound

Nicola von Senger Gallery proudly presents Terry Rodgers' 3rd solo exhibition in Zürich, *Spellbound*. Rodgers (born 1947, Newark, NJ, USA) is an American artist known for his large-scale hyper-realistic figurative paintings. He creates scenes and a view of the world, using the words of Jean Baudrillard, that are a "simulation of something which never really existed."

Half-clothed, with mostly jewellery, fur and underclothing, the protagonists of Terry Rodgers' paintings exist in a setting of luxury. With wine and champagne in their hands, their flawless bodies fit perfectly in the polished environment of fine fabrics, flower bouquets and lustrous chandeliers. Rodgers' works never fails to elicit polarized opinion. Response ranges from seeing it as "mere kitsch" to praising Rodgers as one of the most remarkable exponents of today's figurative painting. As art critic Catherine Somzé says "Rodgers takes up clichés and flips them on their heads. What could initially be mistaken for advertising material, on closer inspection quickly seems to be an indictment of the so-called 'good life'." Looking at those meticulously painted canvases of excessive parties, makes one veer between envy and admiration, repulsion and excitement, and between a recognition of them as false realities and succumbing to them as convincing illusions. In this regard Terry Rodgers' works are also about the viewer. Spellbindingly it draws the viewer into participating and reveals "how we interpret and react to what we see, and how our own lenses determine our perceptions." (TR)

The opulent paintings, clearly related to the Old Master's technique of the baroque era, can be read as a kaleidoscope of Western culture's dream-world: The young jet-set generation celebrating the *ABC's of Living* (2010), stereotyped beauties, clones of the rich and famous, all seduced by the lure of hedonism, promiscuity and luxury – a prescription conveyed by the media, and incorporated by society, of what we should do and how we should interpret the world to achieve happiness. Although *The Coronation of Concupiscence* (2010) seems to visualize the wildest dreams of a large part of mankind, the climax is over or it has never occurred. The protagonists, tired from searching for satisfaction, are captured in a cold and anonymous atmosphere, a whiff of vanitas in the air. Their faces, with eyes averted from each other, speak of loneliness, of an existential void, of longing and hope.

As our vision of freedom is heavily fictional, so is the imagery of Rodgers' works. They are a construction by the artist, exemplified most obviously by his latest body of works, a series of photo-constructions made up of many different layers of photographs, abstract patterns and shapes, drawings and signs. The models depicted mirror the contemporary norms of social acceptance – young, thin, heterosexual. But Rodgers succeeds in deconstructing and unmasking the underlying mechanics of our perception of the world. Through the technique of the photo-constructions, he emphasizes how fragile and imperfect the image is, creating exuberant and surrealist compositions.