

# R A I N E R G R O S S

*Contact Paintings - Logos and Toons*

February 14 - March 23, 2013

**Opening Reception:**

Thursday, February 14th, 6 - 8 PM

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Tuesday - Saturday 10 - 6

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539 W 23RD ST GROUND FLOOR NEW YORK NY 10011

Cover:

Rainer Gross, Double Mickey and Minnie, 2012, Oil and pigments on canvas, 96 x 96 inches

## Rainer Gross

By Michaël Amy

In 1996, Rainer Gross began using the method of monotype-production to make paintings on canvas—in order to expand the latter's formal and emotional range. When one creates a monotype, one applies ink or paint to a slick surface of metal or glass and presses that surface onto a sheet of paper, thereby obtaining a unique print. Gross was intrigued by the image that was left on the plate at the end of this process, and sought to obtain its equivalent in painting.

He proceeded to apply multiple layers of water-based pigments onto a canvas and then covered a second canvas of equal size with thick oil paint, put it face down on top of the first, rubbed the back of it with both hands, and gently pulled the canvases apart, thereby transferring medium from one support onto the other. A mirror image of the original was thereby obtained, but with minute differences, and the two canvases were displayed either side by side or one above the other. Though Gross had long been making figurative paintings, in these works he chose to work within the realm of abstraction.

The situation has changed as far as the recent Logos and Toons are concerned, for here the artist delves into the world of ready-made signs and images—"Things the mind already knows. That gave me room to work on other levels", as Jasper Johns famously put it decades ago. Like Johns' flags and targets, the images Gross has selected are both flat and man-made: the likenesses of Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Goofy and Pluto, the logos of major-league baseball teams, and big businesses like Warner Brothers, McDonalds and Marlboro. These bold designs with their voluptuous curves or sharp edges and angles, and highly saturated, contrasting colors, were conceived to seize the eye. They are, for this reason, ideal territory for painting to explore. There is an aw-shucks type of admiration for these symbols of the American way embedded in these paintings, but it comes with a twist.

The appropriated images are always significantly cropped, so much so that their sources are not instantly recognizable, if at all, for those who know little to nothing about sports and are not regularly bombarded with advertising. In other words, these man-made signs are abstracted. These fragments of masterworks of 20th century American design compel us to complete the images, if we can, in our mind, thereby bringing memory into play—as art always does.

The powdery surfaces of these process-oriented paintings evoke abraded walls bearing multiple old coats of paint or weathered posters plastered one above the other and slowly revealing snippets of information lying underneath them, thereby reinforcing the sense of loss and regeneration already implied by the dramatically truncated images. Thus, beyond the fun and play, there is an undercurrent of tragedy in these pictures of the American vernacular. All things are in a state of flux. Whether working in the area of abstract or figurative painting, Rainer Gross never lets us forget this.