

For Immediate Release

Sophie von Hellermann

"Goddess in the Doorway"

Greene Naftali Gallery

May 12 to June 18, 2005

Greene Naftali Gallery is pleased to present the first New York solo exhibition of the German painter Sophie von Hellermann known for her large-scale, romantic, pastel-washed canvases often installed to suggest complex narrative threads. With a cast ranging from Marcel Duchamp to Mick Jagger, previous shows have focused on such diverse themes as the death of Nico, the life of Anastasia, and a retelling of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. For this exhibition von Hellermann has taken the 100th anniversary of Einstein's scientific breakthrough $E=mc^2$ as occasion to tackle the conflation of art and science with her characteristic irony and wit. Wryly mixing the languages of physics and painting, von Hellermann addresses the concerns of time, light, and space in broad-brushed washes of acrylic color that look as if they have floated right out of her thoughts.

In contrast to many contemporary figurative painters, von Hellermann has chosen to paint from imagination rather than photographs. Translating mental images into paint with an almost automatist spontaneity, she explores the invented space of the unconscious rather than the perspectival space of photography. The paintings seem almost to float away from their physical support, a weightless effect achieved by von Hellermann's unique application of pure pigment to unprimed canvas. Von Hellermann says, "what interests me is how the mind works and how dream images come together from things you've seen, read, and experienced both years ago and yesterday."

In the current exhibition, von Hellermann's romantic constructions— a mixture of humorous, ironic, and noirish escapades— suggest a narrative yet leave the details unresolved. In *Good Space Girl*, a young woman travels inside her zero gravity space capsule as a bottle of champagne floats from her purse. Von Hellermann's exploration of alternative spaces continues in *Billiard*, which portrays a three-dimensional version of billiards, the traditional metaphor of classical physics. In *Space Time Continuum: New York Shire* von Hellermann has created a panhistorical vortex from Victorian England to the present. The homage to Einstein is made explicit in three works. *Tinnef (Sailing Boat)* depicts Einstein as a fugitive in his schooner chased by the ghostly crew of a much faster speedboat. *Dancing in the Kitchen With You* shows Einstein in a lighter moment, shirt untucked, playing his violin. *Einstein 1905*, a diptych, juxtaposes a large portrait of Einstein as he contemplates radiating light with a relatively small painting of an elephant.

In the past, von Hellermann has frequently addressed the institutional framing of her work through the simplest gestures. One London show, for example, was staged in the unrenovated warehouse space of a record distribution company and incorporated the opening night afterparty debris into the course of the exhibition. For the current show, she has opened up the gallery in way that allows the work to literally be approached from a variety of angles. *Goddess in the Doorway* extends from the gallery's public exhibition space to the private storage area in the back.

The artist lives and works in London. She is part of the Dusseldorf and London based collective hobbypopMUSEUM, showing at Deitch Projects, May 7 – June 12, 2005.

For further information, please visit our website, www.greenenaftaligallery.com.