

/// NEWS //////////////////////////////////////

**TOM SANFORD**

*CLASH*

**Galerie Nordine Zidoun**

11 November 2011 - 31 December 2011

**Opening Thursday 10th November 2011, 6 to 9 pm**



Tom Sanford, *Shepard Fairey Fight*, 2011

Erna Hecey is pleased to announce New-York based American artist Tom Sanford's exhibition *CLASH* at Galerie Nordine Zidoun in Luxembourg. While Tom Sanford's work has been frequently presented in the USA and in Europe since the early 2000's it is his first exhibition in Luxembourg.

Among the most mischievous of image makers working today, Tom Sanford wields the visual acuity of pictorial veracity to cut through mediated distance, laying bare ugly truths with satiric incision that lets us laugh just enough to disguise the more visceral flinch in our gut reaction. His terms of exaggeration, whereby caricature is a nearly sincere form of flattery, are emotional and epistemological- not so much an abnegation of truth as an investigation into what any truth might actually mean. That he does so in a common language and through events, figures and signs we all readily recognize, dispels the clutter of commentary so that clarity itself may guide us ever more deeply into the utter confusion by which we experience the hyper reality of events and existence itself. Rare in the art world today, his art actually makes sense, but it is that very rationality that gives room for the inane absurdity of his subjects to manifest their own irrationality.

Among Sanford's favorite tropes by which he consistently frames the contemporary to a wider skeptical scrutiny is the academic genre of History Painting. Hierarchically considered above all other genres as the aesthetic epitome of fine art since its inception in the Italian Renaissance and until Modernism rendered such terms obsolete four centuries later, History Painting is the ideal medium for Tom Sanford's uncanny confluence of signification and meaninglessness. Trivia, be it sports statistics, public opinion polls or nasty gossip, is only important in so far as we obsess over it, and fascinated as many of are by these things, Sanford takes this mass mania into the realm of personal fetish and public spectacle. By historicizing current affairs and giving the historical

patina of grand import to contemporary figures- in this show the savaging of artist Shepard Fairey by leftist squatters in Copenhagen, a fatal stampede of sale hungry shoppers at a discount store amidst the economic crash of America, and the rise of the angry white voter in an early Tea Party rally, but in the past he's given similar treatment to the killing of metal star Dimebag Darrell, a brawl at a music awards ceremony and populated his paintings with personages like Kate Moss, L'il Kim, 50 Cent and Tupac Shakur- Tom Sanford manifests the myopia by which we focus on the incidental while ignoring the larger issues and underlying forces that direct these events, as well as our delirious dedication to them.

Working inversely but to very much the same effect as his latest body of work included here, cheaply commissioned paintings of Mao from China the artist reworks to generic impersonations of identity, Sanford's historical paintings invest petty behavior with heroic import and transform the quotidian into epic allegory. History Painting, from the Latin *historia*, or literally 'story-painting,' offers Tom Sanford the ultimate vehicle for getting across the imperatives of narrative by which the stories he tells dissimilate the modified and manipulative hybridity of news in the age of infotainment. His re-creation of events belong to the hyperbole of docudrama reenactments yet are rendered with an attention to detail and visual verisimilitude that could well place them in the journalistic documentary tradition of witness photography. Like Mao, the iconographic is both absolute and infinitely malleable, a truth posited in the telling and given certainty only as it is agreed upon.

At once prurient and voyeuristic, the pathos and absurdity by which this artist delineates the mutant persona of fame and notoriety in our society brings to mind the hysteria by which urban myth and conspiracy theory constitute a new kind of alternative reality today. As such they hearken back to the mythological and religious subject matter that was the original province of historical paintings, but it is not even the subject that matters so much here. Declamatory and authoritative, these are not just incidental paintings; they are History Paintings, a 'you are there' fabrication where actuality is made epic and grandly monumental in style and scale. We like it all larger than life, these paintings remind us, precisely because as such they are not life. And it is hard to think of an artist working today who paints fiction's great impersonation with the deftness of our consensual deception than Tom Sanford.

**Carlo McCormick,  
NYC October 2011**

**Tom Sanford** born in 1975 in Bronxville, NY studied at Columbia University, NYC and Hunter College City University New-York

His work has been exhibited since the early 2000's at Leo Koenig Inc., New York, (2006 and 2008) at Erna Hecey Project space in Brussels, as well as at ArtBrussels and Fiac 2009, at gallery Faurchou (2005/2009) and gallery Poulsen (2011) in Copenhagen, Wetern Projects, Los Angeles (2004) and at Tomoyo Saito Gallery, Tokyo (2003) Sanford's work was included in *Big Picture*, Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York, NY. (2010) *Leisure Suite (curated by Martin Basher)*, Neiman Center Columbia University, New York, (2008) *No New Tale To Tell....*, 31 GRAND, Brooklyn, NY (2007) *The Incomplete (curated by Hubert Neumann)*, Chelsea Art Museum, New York, NY (2007) *Heroes...Like us?*, Palazzo delle Arti, Napoli, Italy (2007) *Dangerous Beauty*, Chelsea Art Museum, New York, NY (2007) *Leaving Cockaigne*, Leo Koenig Inc., NYC (2006)

For further information please contacte Anne Solene Groppe t. + 352 26 29 [anne.galerieidoun@gmail.com](mailto:anne.galerieidoun@gmail.com) or visit [www.galerieidoune.com](http://www.galerieidoune.com) and [www.ernahecey.com](http://www.ernahecey.com)

**Galerie Nordine Zidoun**  
101 rue Adolphe Fischer  
L-1250 Luxembourg