

# POSTMASTERS

postmasters 459 w 19 street nyc 10011 212 727 3323

fax 212 229 2829

postmasters@thing.net

for immediate release:

September 8 - October 13, 2012

## ADAM CVIJANOVIC

### *Natural History*



Adam Cvijanovic is having his first solo show in New York since 2008.

Cvijanovic deploys large-scale paintings based on the iconic tableaux of North American wildlife at New York's American Museum of Natural History originally painted by James Perry Wilson among others under the direction of James L. Clark. Cvijanovic re-imagines their work from the Hall of North American Animals. He transforms the space of the gallery into a remixed diorama of its own.

Executed in his favored medium of Flashe and latex paint on Tyvek mounted directly onto the wall, the works in the show reconfigure the staged, three-dimensional scenes of animals set in artificial landscapes into backdrops for the artist's redefined subjects.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is *Discovery of America*, a sixty five foot-long painting extending across two walls in the front gallery, a monumental trompe-l'œil of a littered room – the exhibition space during installation - in which two paintings appear to physically crash into one another. The larger one is a spectacular, prehistoric panorama in which creatures from the Late Pleistocene Era, roam through an ecologically mashed up landscape running from ice age Alaska to prehistoric southern California. On the perpendicular wall, the other painting, based on an archival photograph, depicts the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889. And so, in an art installation gone awry, a dark and dramatic narrative unfolds: the brutal collision of time, nature, animals, and men. An America void of any human presence crashes violently with an America of settlers chasing Manifest Destiny.

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Another large work in the front gallery draws from a diorama called *Wapiti*. Here a heroic landscape of Montana, set in the shallow space of an artist's studio, is partially obscured and abstracted, obliterated by expressionistic, gestural brushstrokes, likely laid down by the studio's inhabitant. As the artist intervenes with their habitat, the elks "reciprocate" and enter the studio space.

In the back gallery, the classic taxidermy animals from the Museum's dioramas are altogether re-imagined, cartoons and corpses inhabiting a primeval American landscape. For the tableau representing common White tailed deer, Cvijanovic replaces naturalistic specimens with Bambi and his little, Disney-fied forest friends. A painting inspired by the diorama of North Slope caribou portrays the animals as slaughtered carcasses.

Even though it addresses the essential ideas of time, extinction, human presence and intervention into the natural world, Cvijanovic's show is ultimately not about history itself. Instead it functions as meditation on painting and its meta-capacity to transform the real, the historic, and the imagined space. *Natural History* is a visual essay on the magical believability of a painted image where realistic renderings, abstraction, spatial illusions and cartoons are seamlessly fused into one.



Since his last solo show in New York Adam Cvijanovic has created large installations for Prospect 1, New Orleans Biennial and Liverpool Biennial at Tate Liverpool, and for exhibitions at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh. Most recently he participated in *American Dreamers*, a show at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, and the 2012 Biennale of Sydney, where he exhibited two monumental painting installations. Upcoming this fall is an exhibition, *The Stumbling Present: Ruins in Contemporary Art* at Art, Design & Architecture Museum (formerly University Art Museum) in Santa Barbara, California.

Postmasters Gallery located at 459 West 19th Street between 9 and 10 Avenues is open Tuesday through Saturday 11 – 6  
Please contact Magdalena Sawon or Paulina Bebecka with questions and image requests [postmasters@thing.net](mailto:postmasters@thing.net)  
**[www.postmastersart.com](http://www.postmastersart.com)**