

For Immediate Release: March 12, 2008

Daniel Richter: *Die Idealisten*

March 25 – May 3, 2008

Opening Reception: Tuesday, March 25, 6 – 8 pm



David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by German artist Daniel Richter. This will be the artist's second solo exhibition at the gallery and will feature a selection of paintings and works on paper. Richter is currently the focus of an expansive survey, which traveled in 2007 from Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany to Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Den Haag, The Netherlands. The exhibition opens at Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Málaga, Spain in April and continues in the fall to the Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO, his first solo museum exhibition in the United States.

When Daniel Richter entered the Academy of Fine Arts in Hamburg in the early 1990s, the previously untrained artist viewed art as an opportunity to combine "freedom – as vague or idealistic as that concept may be – with aimlessness."¹ He first became known for his colorful abstract paintings, exploring superficiality and excessive ornamentation via patterning, repetition, arabesques, drips, and graffiti outlines. The artist garnered critical success in 1999 when he introduced large-scale figurative paintings. Despite the perceived departure, Richter actively maintains that the dichotomy between abstract and figurative painting is a constructed fiction, since the formal problems of color and composition remain constant.

Embracing an overtly psychedelic aesthetic, Richter's works are often painted with bright, almost fluorescent colors, pulsating and swirling as if they had materialized from a chemical reaction taking place on the surface of the work. Even in the sparser compositions, the canvases seem to swell with abundant activity and nervous intensity. The quieter spaces in his compositions reveal a coexistence of many different brushstrokes, patches, and spots, adding to the overall feeling of erupting energy. The artist's work consciously exists in a long tradition of painting, notably indebted to history painting. Richter is deeply interested in artists like Werner Büttner, Albert Oehlen, and Martin Kippenberger for what he has described as an "arrogant, loud-mouthed conceptualism."²

Concerned with problems of authenticity and documentation, Richter often finds inspiration in magazines, newspapers, and books. His works are equally activated by an engagement with dream states; thus Richter's images exist essentially as collaged constructions. Rife with both latent and overt violence, skepticism, political struggle, social transformation, and public upheaval, the paintings concurrently brim with humor and exuberance, as dynamic celebrations of the medium. *Vis-à-vis* the painterly process, drawing functions for Richter as a vital mode of understanding the possibility and durability of his subjects. Within his artistic practice, the works on paper extend beyond experiments in composition to encompass psychological studies of his themes.

The painting *Die Idealisten*, 2008, from which the exhibition derives its title, emblemizes the aggressive fervency, which has come to characterize the artist's work. In this anarchic canvas, three boldly colored figures writhe amidst a fiery, destructive urban scene; however, their poses seem more evocative of rock musicians, than rioters. The conflation of music and social unrest underscores Richter's early punk and leftist affiliations, but resolutely defies definite political commentary.

¹ P. Kaiser, Interview with the artist in *Huntergrund* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2006), p. 196.

² Kaiser, pp. 196-197.

Press preview with the artist, March 25 at 5 pm. For information contact julia@davidzwirner.com