

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Alexandra Wiesenfeld

OCCASIONAL BEAST

March 26 – April 30, 2011

Opening Reception: Saturday, March 26, 5 – 8pm

Artist Talk: Saturday, April 23, 2pm

Gallery Hours: Tue – Sat, 11am – 5pm and by appointment

Gallery KM is thrilled to present “Occasional Beast,” our first solo show of work by Los Angeles based artist Alexandra Wiesenfeld. The gallery will hold a reception for the artist on Saturday March 26th, from five to eight in the evening, as well as an Artist Talk on Sunday April 23rd, at 2pm.

In “Occasional Beast,” Alexandra Wiesenfeld invites us into an examination of form and psychology, in which figures populate an imagined world of impossible juxtapositions that is nonetheless very grounded in the daily language of relationships and physical space. The exhibition consists of beautifully articulated large-scale oil paintings, as well as looser mixed-media works on paper, primarily presented as triptychs. The works on paper treat us to a rare combination of fresh presence and fully articulated thought. Distinct figures and animals populate backgrounds of deep color with only a hinted horizon, as saturated pigments run up against loose drips and moments of exposed paper, gestural paint is applied over charcoal and pencil, and paper is often layered into collage, creating additional texture, space and immediacy. Forms enter and break their own frames, and perspective is not so much physically distorted as psychologically compressed.

The larger paintings are in many respects self-portraits, not only because they often include a central figure very reminiscent of Wiesenfeld herself, but also because Wiesenfeld’s extended process of creation means that each painting represents the psychological and temporal reality of the artist, as well as her physical form. The paintings were created over many years of layering, each finished canvas often containing as many as ten completed paintings layered beneath it. Organically formed, the resulting surface is simultaneously extremely finished and somehow new. The work is unplanned and yet remarkably rigorous and ambitious in scope.

These pieces show us an artist who is more than capable of working psychological-narrative and visual-formal problems simultaneously, and with intellectual rigor. Animals enter the frame as symbols, but also quite clearly as animals, and very successfully as formal elements of the piece. A goat may be a representation of our bestial self, but it is also a goat. A child may be a reflection of our adult malnourished innocence, but it is also a child. The beast and the figure are given equal weight, and

the question of whether or not the pig in “This Pig Used To Sit on a Biedermeier Couch” is porcelain or flesh matters much less than its size, its placement in the central figure’s lap, its proximity to those strange slipper-type boots she is wearing (is that a hazmat suit?), and the intensity of the saturated landscape surrounding it—a landscape that is not so much background, as a fully characterized presence.

It is difficult to mention multiple imagery and figurative representation without bringing up immediate references to Surrealism, given that movement’s ubiquitous importance in painting’s recent heritage. And yet, Wiesenfeld’s work is not surreal. The subconscious is very clearly at play, but the pieces themselves are much more about deliberate consciousness—the willful exploration of the messier aspects of consciousness and physicality—than any sense of succumbing to the unconscious. Here, Wiesenfeld stands on a more complicated ground than her predecessors, and it is a ground that she holds incredibly well. What we see in her work is not the absence of control, but the assertion that the concept of pure control is as flawed as that of complete surrender, and that neither reason nor its opposite can be absolute. In “Occasional Beast,” reason meets intuition, and comes through the experience better for it. These are no simple dreamscapes; Wiesenfeld is very much awake, and as her audience, so are we.

Alexandra Wiesenfeld has exhibited her work in recent solo exhibitions at the Happy Lion Gallery in Los Angeles, as well as in group exhibitions at the Nord Art, Germany, the Torrance Art Museum, L.A. Art House, Beverly Hills, and the Dactyl Foundation, New York, and the Eagle Rock Cultural Center, Los Angeles. She received her BFA from Pomona College and an MFA from Montana State University, and is currently an Associate Professor at Los Angeles City College.