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PRESS RELEASE

Simon English

“To eat well in Britain, you have to have
breakfast three times a day”—Oscar Wilde

Full English

April 24-June 12, 2010

A “Full English” at a café in Hackney, East London, means a breakfast consisting of eggs, bacon, sausage, beans, chips, mushrooms, tomatoes, toast and hash browns or a variation on the theme.

A “Full English” can take you in a number of different directions, not least depending how you eat it, when you eat it and the degree of alcohol you’ve had the night before.

Robert Goff Gallery is pleased to announce the exhibition “Full English”, an equally excessive spread that includes the works “Lady Digby”, “After hours (in the Shadow of the bar)”, “Upstairs Downstairs”, “The Mouth of Rustling Knives”, “Alice Through the (Cocaine-Stained) Looking Glass” and “Guns and Roses to the tune of Kettle Song,” to name but a few. It is the first time the London-based artist Simon English has combined both drawing and painting into one show. It has been ten years since English has made works on canvas.

“Full English” clearly emerges through the lens of the artist’s singular life and is activated through the machinations of the artist’s subconscious and the performance of making. English opens up the very personal in a bid to reach out to a more collective and shared experience. “Like a good song, I aim to make my experience yours,” says English.

In a recent essay by Poul Erik Tojner on Simon English and Tal R, he writes “each in his distinct and very different manner, could be said to find and construe their work with clear references to their own lives. Having said that, it’s also to some extent clear what they are not: Art as social activism, art as entirely separated from the biography or even art as a commentary on art. What makes these two artists important on the contemporary art scene, however, is their ability never to let the private take the lead.”

In an Art Review magazine commentary on Volker Diehl Gallery’s recent version of this exhibition, Alicia Reuter describes “the artist’s loving and sometimes heart-breakingly unrequited feelings toward painting”. English himself describes returning to canvas as “feeling a bit like going back to an all male boarding School.”

The painting “Lady Digby (The Rotters Club)” references Digby House and Sherborne School, Dorset and allow English to return to puberty (and painting), describing growing breasts with bewilderment. The exquisite corpse of “Lady Digby” fights to find an ungainly balance between her male and female persona. This two-spirited hermaphrodite tries to reach reconciliation with her body and find a poetic alignment between drawing and painting. Her protrusive semi-covered form is ludicrously serenaded by a prayer for swimming trunks (taken from a section in Jonathan Coe’s novel “The Rotters Club”, set in a 1970’s school) – from Benjamin, who not only finds a pair of swimming trunks in the locker room but God at the same time.

In 2005, Simon English published his first monograph “Simon English and the Army Pink Snowman” (Blackdog Publishing) with extensive essays by Bill Arning and Stella Santacatterina. His most recent Shows in 2010 have included “Aspects of Collecting” at the Essl Museum, Austria with works selected by the Louisiana Museum in Denmark, moving onto Arken Museum of Modern Art, Denmark, opening in June 2010. A special 8-page feature in Mute Magazine, Volume 4 is due out this May. His works are in many important museum and private collections, including the Louisiana Museum (Denmark), The Essl Museum (Austria), the Israel Museum, Sammlung Falckenberg and the Burger Collection.