

INMAN GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Inman Gallery is pleased to present
the exhibitions:

Marc Swanson
Inclinations
&
Robert Ruello
Fuzzy Models

April 21 – June 3, 2017

Opening Reception:
Friday, April 21, 6 – 8 pm



Marc Swanson, *Man of Mystery*, 2017
graphite and collage on paper
14 x 11 inches

Inman Gallery is pleased to present **Marc Swanson: *Inclinations*** in the Main Gallery, an exhibition of works on paper and sculpture. In the South Gallery we present **Robert Ruello: *Fuzzy Models***, an exhibition of large paintings and a salon of works on paper. Both shows open **Friday, April 21**, with a reception from 6 to 8 pm, and will continue through June 3.

Inclinations is Swanson's second solo exhibition at Inman Gallery. The exhibition features thirty new works; twenty works on paper and ten plaster sculptures. Swanson's work is thoroughly elegiac, full of memory, nostalgia and excerpts from his own life experiences. The title of the exhibition, *Inclinations*, recalls the dual meaning of the word as either a slope or a person's disposition or predilection. The duality between the authenticity and theatricality of the self is central to the show, as it is to Swanson's broader practice.

Raised in a small town in New Hampshire, but having lived much of his adult life in cities, Swanson is exploring the tension between the urban and the rural. He interweaves natural worlds (deer, mountains, waterfalls) with depictions of urbane individuals to investigate the complexities of gender identities, theatricality and self-presentation. Swanson has incorporated collaged images from his own vintage book and magazine collection to create a restrained melange of landscapes, romanticized portraits, and hand-drawn text from his own diary entries. The works present a language from the past; one can read the visual conventions of Hollywood film stars, stage sets, and marbled book edges, among others. The artist intends for the text — sometimes wrapping around images or filling in white space — to serve as a visual gesture rather than to deliver a specific narrative. These visual suggestions and cues combine to create a poetic sense of comfortable intimacy. Here, Swanson samples, re-works, and re-presents his own visual vocabulary.

Swanson is creating voyeuristic moments that are at once transgressive and autobiographical. Found 19th and 20th century images of men and women challenge and return our gaze; these portraits of strangers from the past, such as the man in *Man of Mystery*, present an opaque narrative surrounded by suggestions of intimacy and knowledge. In works such as *Between the Sun and the Moon*, we are invited to dive into the work as omnipotent viewers; theater curtains reveal a sun radiating outwards towards oculi of landscapes and a clouded moonlit sky. The timeless, mystical quality of these works also maintains a sincerity and deftness of hand for which Swanson is well-known.

Swanson's plaster sculptures present similar motifs to the works on paper. Encased in shadow boxes, the sculptures present vignettes of hanging forms in rough-hewn plaster. Frozen waterfalls and stalactite-like forms creep ominously over an ivory-white brick wall. These are the backdrops of an imagined and yet realistic landscapes, evoking stillness, memory, and a bit of dread. Draped fabric and rope-like elements (a signature motif of his) echo stage sets and domestic trappings.

The two mediums in the exhibition — collage and plaster — present voyeurism from different angles, using different materials to explore similar impulses. Swanson's work combines revelatory personal narratives with formal explorations into the absolute nature of lived experience.

Robert Ruello's exhibition, *Fuzzy Models*, in the South Gallery, is Ruello's sixth solo exhibition with Inman Gallery. The exhibition includes three paintings and a salon of works on paper. The larger paintings, from the *Reflect* series, illustrate the disconnect between the immediate act of viewing and the unseen processes that form our viewing experiences. Ruello filters his painting practice through the effects that technology and media have on our habits of "seeing." Ruello's work asks us to consider what vagaries exist between reading a painting and reading a screen. The acrylic on canvas paintings present grids of poppy-red and ochre circles, which form the background of the painting's space. Washes of light blue, white, and linear dark blue elements move between the grid's and distort the perception of structure. In each work in the *Reflect* series are the mirror-like, glossy blue-gray "screens," which jut out from the two-dimensional space of the painting, giving a perpendicular sense of perspective and an uncanny landscape-like form to the abstract formalism.

Painters have long explored how to depict three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional picture plane. Ruello's painting practice has expanded this investigation to recall scientific and technological visual idioms that inform our understanding of ourselves, and vice versa. Evoking a laboratory environment or enlarged pixels on a screen, Ruello's work reveals both the structure and the finished product of painting in investigating "the modern dilemma of seeing what is actually happening in front of us." The *Reflect* series prioritizes the distortion of our viewing experience as a subject matter.



Robert Ruello, *Reflect #2*, 2015
acrylic and flashe on canvas
78 x 58 inches

As the artist notes, he is "simply presenting both the structure and the distorted plane as a unified whole."

Ruello's smaller works on paper in the exhibition, from the *Switch-It* series, employ a similar palette of ochres, blacks, and blues; the ink on paper works each present a structure similar to the larger paintings. However, Ruello restricts himself with a formal "array" of a grid within the frame of the paper. The grid interacts with visually disrupting elements such as linear paths behind the grid, and blips of color that overlay the grid. Energetic and charged with visual power, the *Switch-It* series is movement and transition visualized. Ruello's formal investigation of how we move through and disrupt various environments (digital, analog, and in-between) is rendered through these graphic elements. As he notes, "As a result of this disruption, the array is no longer stable or predictable — visual illusions and shifting figure/ground relationships begin to emerge."

Ruello's work stems from an enjoyment in the tension between the stable and the unpredictable. Though not figural, his work presents elements that are recognizable from our visual vernacular. Digital screens, popular science, and the history of painting, are within Ruello's investigations between what is real, what is not, and what lies between.

Marc Swanson (born 1969, Connecticut) lives and works in Catskill, New York. Swanson earned an MFA from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College, New York, in 2004. He has exhibited nationally since his inclusion in the inaugural Greater New York at PS1 in 2005, including solo exhibitions at the St. Louis Art Museum, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, and, most recently, *Chambre* (in collaboration with Jack Ferver), at the New Museum, New York, and the American Dance Institute, Rockville, Maryland, in 2016. Important group exhibitions have included *The Spectacular of Vernacular*, Walker Art Center, *Between Spaces*, MOMA/PS1, New York, and *Modern Menageries*, Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME, among others.

Robert Ruello (born 1958, New Orleans) lives and works in Houston, TX. He earned an MFA from Columbia University (1997), a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1987), and a BA in Psychology from Loyola University, New Orleans, LA (1982). From 1987-89 he was an artist-in-residence at the Core Program, Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. His recent exhibitions include a solo show, *Fuzzy Essentials*, at the Galveston Arts Center (2015), and the group exhibitions *Howard Sherman: Artist's Picks*, Houston Arts Alliance, *Mighty Line*, Williams Tower Gallery, *Mapping Galveston*, Galveston Artist Residency, Galveston, TX, and *In Plain Sight*, McClain Gallery, Houston, TX. Ruello is the recipient of a Gottlieb Foundation Grant (2010) and a Dora Maar Residency Fellowship (2009). In 2012, Ruello's work was featured in *New American Paintings* 102.

For more information, please contact the gallery at (713) 526-7800 or at info@inmangallery.com.