



For immediate release

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Les Yeux du Monde presents

Clay Witt

The Peaceable Kingdom

5 – 31 December 2008

Opening Reception, First Friday, 5 December, 5:30 – 8:00 pm

Les Yeux du Monde is proud to present *Clay Witt: The Peaceable Kingdom* for its final show of the season and in the current venue, at 500 West Main Street. The exhibition will open on Friday 5 December and run through December 31. There will be a First Friday opening reception with the artist from 5:30 – 8 p.m.

Witt joined the Les Yeux du Monde stable two years ago in a legendary two-person exhibition, *Dark Light* with his former professor and mentor, Dean Dass. This very popular exhibition highlighted both individual and collaborative works by these two artists who have pioneered new techniques in printmaking and painting in combination with time honored traditions and materials. Since 2006, Witt has been honing and perfecting these techniques and materials to create his latest body of work, which will debut in this exhibition, entitled *The Peaceable Kingdom*.

Witt took the title for the show and for the largest work in the exhibition from a series of nineteenth century American paintings by the Quaker artist Edward Hicks with this subject matter and title. Witt writes, “to me, Hicks represents the essential mystical folk artist of our country’s nineteenth century adolescence, an artistic genre to which I feel a great aesthetic affinity.”

Of the unusual technique Witt employs to create his luminescent works, he writes:

“While my works may at first glance resemble straightforward paintings, they are in fact expressions of an idiosyncratic technical style that I have developed over the past two decades, one that incorporates intaglio printmaking, collage, gilding, and polished varnish layering into a final product that recalls the visual tropes of religious art as much as it does anything else.” He parallels his “laborious and time-consuming process” (which results in no more than five large paintings a year) with a “sort of mystical artistic quest.” The resulting paintings are otherworldly, astral, and vibrate somewhere between this world and the next. Most feature images of an eerie nature—spindly trees and animals reside together with Biblical and classical references. Witt refers to his final paintings as “a self-revealing series of contemporary icons that, while not allied with any particular creed or dogma, do in fact reflect my interest and research into the artistic expressions of religious faith.”

Witt is currently a Visiting Artist at the University of Virginia. Born in Belgium to a family from Richmond VA, he grew up in England before returning to the United States where he completed his BA in printmaking and sculpture from the University



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of Virginia and his MFA in painting from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. He also received a Fulbright grant to apprentice to a Master Calligrapher in Damascus, Syria in 2001, an experience he considers one of his “most significant” and influential courses of study.

There are several events planned in conjunction with the exhibition in addition to the *First Friday Opening*, December 5, from 5:30 until 8:00 pm. There will also be a *Feast on Art* lunch with the artist on Wednesday, December 10 at noon. Please call the gallery at 434.973.5566 or email us at **LesYeuxduMonde@aol.com** to make reservations for this lunch. The cost is \$10 per person. On 16 December at 5 p.m. Witt will unveil a new print for the *Collectors' Club*, followed by an *Artist's Talk and Slide Show* at 6 p.m. The talk is free and open to the public.

Gallery hours for December are Tuesday – Saturday 11 – 5, Sunday from 1 – 5 and by appointment. Please visit our website, **www.lesyeuxdumonde.com** for more information.

The gallery is open Tuesday through Thursday, 11-5, Friday and Saturday 11-6, and by appointment.

Les Yeux du Monde

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