

WASSERMANPROJECTS

Wasserman Projects to Open Three Concurrent Exhibitions on January 25, 2019

Slate of Exhibitions Highlights Wide Range of Artistic Approaches and Responses To Portraiture and Notions of the Self

On View through March 23, 2019

Detroit—January 24, 2019—Wasserman Projects is pleased to announce its winter exhibitions: *Esther Shalev-Gerz: Selections from The Gold Room*; the group show, *Portray*; and *Felice Panzer Malkin: A Retrospective*. On view concurrently, from January 25 through March 23, 2019, the three presentations are connected by the featured artists' engagements with portraiture as means of exploring wider notions of identity and the self. The upcoming roster of exhibitions also encapsulates Wasserman Projects' vision to present the work of both locally and internationally-based artists, and to show the shared and distinct approaches that a wide breadth of artists bring to a subject. The presentations will occupy the whole of Wasserman Projects' industrial space and provide visitors with a rich and varied aesthetic experience.

“Part of Wasserman Projects' mission is to provide a platform for artists to show their work and to connect with the creative community in Detroit. For our upcoming season, we have the opportunity to present several artists with whom we've previously collaborated, like Esther Shalev-Gerz, Ken Aptekar, and Matthew Hansel, among others, creating a continuity of experience and support,” said Alison Wong, Director of Wasserman Projects. “And at the same time, we are excited to introduce new artists to our community to further enrich and explore timely and topical dialogues within contemporary practice”

Esther Shalev-Gerz: Selections from The Gold Room

The exhibition at Wasserman Projects will feature a video installation and selection of photographs from the artist's *The Gold Room* project, which she first produced in 2016. To create the work, Shalev-Gerz invited five historians to imagine the significance and narratives of five objects in the collection of the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm, whose real histories have been lost to time. Additionally, she asked five individuals who recently found refuge in Sweden to speak to the personal importance of an object they brought with them when they migrated. Interspersed and experienced together in Shalev-Gerz's video, the stories provide a poignant meditation on both the individual and universal value we give to objects and the ways in which they come to represent our cultures and ourselves.

As each person speaks a golden square floats over the center of the screen, at times masking and emphasizing the contours of the speaker's face and hands as well as the object that they are discussing. The abstraction adds an aura of mystery, suggesting the ways in which narratives are both enshrined and forgotten. This sensation is also acutely felt in the photographic portraits that accompany the video installation, and which depict some of the featured participants and objects, with their faces obscured by a golden panel. Notions of journey and shared experience form another important through-line in the project. Indeed, Shalev-Gerz sees *The Gold Room* as a response to *The Scandinavian Destiny*, a text written by Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges that discusses Nordic people as early travelers, who despite their

ventures to foreign places neither captured land nor took cultural property. Instead, they left rune stones, covered with images and writings to represent what they encountered—leaving subtle remnants of their time.

The Gold Room first premiered at the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm, and then traveled to the Koffler Centre of the Arts in Toronto in 2017. The exhibition at Wasserman Projects marks the first American presentation.

Portray

The exhibition examines the continued viability and importance of portraiture in contemporary practice through the work of 14 artists, based locally and across the U.S. and abroad. *Portray* will include paintings, photography, sculpture, works on paper, and mixed-media installations by Ken Aptekar (New York/Paris), Adnan Charara (Detroit), Donald Dietz (Detroit), Matthew Hansel (New York), Robert Raphael (New York), Michael Scoggins (New York), Esterio Segura (Cuba), Susan Silas (New York), William Irving Singer (Detroit), Ryan Standfest (Detroit), Koen Vanmechelen (Belgium), Jamie Vasta (Oakland, CA), Bruno Walpoth (Italy), and Hirosuke Yabe (Japan). Distinct in their visions, approaches, and techniques, the featured artists use portraiture as a means of questioning history, identity, cultural happenings and norms, and the socio-political and economic circumstances of the present. These complicated and multi-layered subjects are addressed through a range of engagements with both traditional portraiture and the visual and conceptual vocabulary of contemporary practice.

For Matthew Hansel, portraiture is means of capturing the human desire to be seen and remembered. By meticulously recreating paintings of historically-significant artists, he attempts to re-enact the artists' own visions of themselves, while also inserting himself into the process and final work. The incorporation of the artistic self takes on a more direct articulation in the work of Susan Silas. For her marble sculpture *Aging Venus*, Silas photographed herself over the course of a decade. Using those images, she created a 3D scan of her changing body, which served as the basis for the sculpture. In this way, Silas takes the classic representation of female beauty, Venus, and filters it through the lens of reality, establishing a new and more embracing picture of the female form. In other instances, the portrait is one that captures the experiences and influences that shape our identity. Using humble and approachable materials like notebooks and chalkboards, Michael Scoggins examines of how language, repetition, and the visual vocabulary of childhood speak to our sense of the world and ourselves.

Felice Panzer Malkin: A Retrospective

Featuring drawings, paintings, and prints, *Felice Panzer Malkin: A Retrospective* offers audiences a survey of American-Israeli artist Felice Panzer Malkin's practice, from the 1960s through the present day. Throughout her career, Panzer Malkin has dealt with everyday subjects, creating images with descriptive titles such as *Woman in Jerusalem Summer*, *Sivan in Sunglasses*, and *Self-Portrait in Grey Vest*. Taking these objects and figures as starting points, Panzer Malkin imbues the portraits with personal feeling and experience in the process of painting, making them at once evocative of reality and the emotions and perspectives that makes our sense of time, place, and truth our own. Of this Panzer Malkin, says "...the artist's perception of an external reality [is] transformed by the act of painting into personal experience... This new reality differs from the appearances we encounter outside of the frame of the painting. *The Woman in a Hat* is essentially distinct from every other woman in a hat, and from all other appearances of women. Fashioning appearance into a reality is, I believe, the essence of art." To convey the fluidity and

connection across Panzer Malkin's work, the exhibition will be hung salon style, creating aesthetic juxtapositions and eschewing any sense of linear progression within her work.

Pazner Malkin was born in Philadelphia and emigrated to Israel in 1949. She spent a year in Paris, studying at the Sorbonne and, then, in 1953 had her first solo exhibition in Tel Aviv. She subsequently exhibited at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and produced Israel's first artist-designed theater posters for the Habima, Cameri, and Matateh theater companies. In 1956, she returned to Paris to study theatrical art and design with Jean-Marie Serreau. Throughout the next three decades, she continued to show her work in both solo and group presentations, including at institutions and cultural spaces in Austin, London, New York, and Philadelphia. A selection from her extensive series of paintings, *Jerusalem People* (1975-81) was exhibited at the American Cultural Center in Jerusalem. Pazner Malkin also conceived, researched, and designed the documentary exhibition, *Jewish Figurative Art: The First 3,000 Years*, which went on display in 1996 at the Center for Secular Humanist Judaism in Detroit, Michigan. Today, as in the past, Pazner Malkin devotes most of her time to painting in her Jerusalem studio.

ABOUT WASSERMAN PROJECTS

Wasserman Projects was conceived by Michigan-native Gary Wasserman and opened its doors in a former firehouse in Detroit's historic Eastern Market, one of the oldest and largest year-round markets in the U.S., in fall 2015. Wasserman Projects is guided by a spirit of collaboration, recognizing that artist projects are best realized and most meaningful when they engage a broad range of cultural organizers, community leaders, and the dynamic and diverse populations of Detroit. The organization works with artists from across disciplines and around the world, presenting exhibitions and performances that will spark a discourse on art, but also cultural, social, or political issues, which are particularly active and timely in Detroit. Wasserman Projects is nimble in its approach, operating in part as a for-profit gallery as well as a presentation space, and helps artists bring to fruition new projects that may not otherwise be possible.

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For further information, please contact:

Alina E. Sumajin
Co-founder and Principal
PAVE Communications & Consulting
alina@paveconsult.com / 646-369-2050