



PRESS RELEASE

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Aaron Johnson

Star-Crossed:

*New Reverse-Painted Acrylic Polymer Peel Paintings
on Polyester American Flags*

**Opening reception: Thursday, September 4, 6 to 8 pm
September 4 – October 18, 2008**

Stux Gallery is pleased to present *Star-Crossed*, a series of new paintings by Aaron Johnson that evoke an entangled dialogue existing somewhere between critical commentary and painterly oblivion. All of the works are ceremoniously painted upon the emotionally charged, and politically controversial, American flag.

In narratives that are both horrific and hilarious, Johnson indicts contemporary America, targeting specifically the marriage of church and state, the dubious nature of our current wars, and the absurd spectacle of patriotism as professed by the media. While provoking the cultural flames of desecration, iconoclasm, and sacrilege, Johnson simultaneously celebrates the fundamental American ideal of freedom of expression.

Among the artist's dreadfully delightful cast of characters, viewers will find themselves confronted by torrid depictions of a crucifixion and Lady Liberty reinterpreted as Cyclopes of a singular vision, and a Johnny Appleseed tormented by a fruitless wasteland. These anti-heroes fumble through foibles amongst the murky corners of the American Myth. The resulting works offer foreboding hints of what is to come, namely disgorged body parts, erupting heads, and ultimately the complete obliteration of the figure.

Johnson's uniquely bizarre method of painting has evolved as he continually refines his utterly inimitable reverse-painted acrylic polymer peel paintings. Painting completely in reverse onto plastic film, Johnson builds up multiple layers of paint that are ultimately set with acrylic polymer directly onto American flags, thereby allowing the artist to release the painted layering from the plastic substrate. Alongside the paintings will be drawings that reveal Johnson's distinctive method of processing images via sifting through the New York Times, selecting images, and allowing schizophrenic layering and distortions to occur.

Stylistically and formally, Johnson reaches out to a variety of influences, including Goya's *Desastres de la Guerra*, Hieronymus Bosch's *Hell*, Peter Saul's pop-psychedelia, and Warhol's oxidation piss paintings. With this body of work Johnson asserts his place in a lineage of artists who use art as a platform to question contemporary society.

Born in Minnesota, Aaron Johnson received his MFA from Hunter College, NY in 2005, and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. His work has been featured in numerous exhibitions at such venues as the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, NY, Knoxville Museum of Art, TN, Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, NY, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, CO, Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, NY, Mogadishni, Copenhagen, Denmark, Marlborough Gallery, NY. His work has appeared in The New York Times, The Village Voice, Beautiful Decay, The Art Newspaper, and Time Out London. His work can be found in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, NY.