

# Jenny Holzer

# Press Release

May 12 to June 17, 2006. Opening Reception: Friday, May 12, 6 to 8 p.m.

Cheim & Read is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by Jenny Holzer presented in collaboration with Yvon Lambert New York. The exhibition at Cheim & Read will consist of Holzer's 2005 and 2006 series of oil on linen paintings and a single, large-scale LED (light emitting diode) display. The works feature declassified and other sensitive United States government documents. A color catalogue with an essay by Robert Storr will accompany the exhibition. Yvon Lambert New York will present pigment prints featuring projections of Holzer's own signature texts, the poems of others, archival documents, and declassified and other sensitive United States government material.

In her newest work, Holzer negotiates the political landscape after 9/11 and traces the debate over covert operations, ghost detainees, prisoner abuse, and war tragedies in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay through the directives, emails, and testimonies of policy makers, soldiers, and prisoners. The documents, many of which were classified at the time they were written, originated in United States government and military agencies and have been made part of the public record through the landmark Freedom of Information Act. As with many of her previous works, Holzer's relay of information and presentation of a range of voices presume no particular ideology. Her paintings lend tactility to documents often unseen and offer visibility to hidden pasts and a masked present. Suspending the disastrous, the grotesque, and the informative in a seductive painterly surface, Holzer counters the compulsion to turn and ignore with the desire to see and know more. Comparing Holzer's new paintings with Andy Warhol's "Death and Disaster" series, Robert Storr writes in his catalogue essay, "...the very dissonance between the obscene realism and formal elegance, tabloid violence and domestic intimacy does nothing to soften the horrid fascination of the depicted subjects or alleviate the existential queasiness they provoke."

Holzer first conceived of using government documents as a medium in 2003. When asked by Wired Magazine how she would redo Google's interface, Holzer commented, "I'd provide a secret, a surprise, every time someone visits Google. The user would get the covert stuff that makes fate. The homepage might include... a national security directive... All the documents would be real and available on the Web." Expanding upon this idea, Holzer used sensitive government materials in her 2004 solo exhibition, *Truth Before Power*, at the Kunsthhaus Bregenz in Austria. Days prior to the 2004 United States presidential election, documents, in the form of light, were projected onto George Washington University's Gelman Library in Washington, D.C. The library houses the National Security Archive, a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to defending and expanding public access to government information. Holzer has relied on the NSA and its director, Thomas Blanton, since her research into archival government materials commenced. In the fall of 2005, Holzer projected a selection of documents onto New York University's Bobst Library. Scrolling the LaGuardia Place facade like credits at the end of a film, the documents Holzer chose explored the United States' current 'war' on terrorism, the consequences of 9/11, the practice of intelligence and counter-intelligence, issues of prisoner abuse, and the ongoing tragedies of war. The documents glazed the downtown architecture and became entangled in its contours. Like a constant presence, a familiar building, or truth, ignored secrets were evident.

Holzer's paintings and LED display at Cheim & Read and 'secret' document pigment prints at Yvon Lambert New York make permanent this rivalry of ignorance and secrecy.

Jack Pierson: *Melancholia Passing into Madness* remains on view through May 6.

For additional information please contact us by phone 212/242-7727, fax 212/242-7737, or email [galler@cheimread.com](mailto:galler@cheimread.com). Cheim & Read 547 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street New York 10001