ALMINE RECH

Adam Helms
Pathos Formula

Sep 6 — Oct 30, 2013 | Brussels

Opening on September 6th, 2013 from 2 to 8 pm

Almine Rech Gallery is pleased to present *Pathos Formula* – an exhibition of new work by American artist Adam Helms. This is the Helms' first solo exhibition in Belgium.

The title of the exhibition is a reference to the German art historian Aby Warburg. Warburg thought of his pathos formula as sort of a visual marking, or 'anthropology' of the emotion of the art of antiquity. In this exhibition, Helms approaches themes such as archiving and indexing by creating groups of images and exploring how their contextual relationships create a narrative impulse and 'pathos'. In Helms' strategy, images of various kinds–taken from the Internet, magazines, film stills, found photographs, postcards as well as the artist's own photographs–become uncanny and symbolic, de-contextualizing an individual's presence resulting in an instinctive search for identification, recognition and memory.

Helms' work has focused primarily on the iconography relating to representations and symbols of marginalized social groups and radical organizations. Helms' images become visual archetypes of sorts. Through Helms' execution, portraits, heralds or landscapes become de-contextualized and representations of violence and power become processed as visual artifacts possessing both a sense of romanticism and subversion. The politics represented in Helms' work become cloaked in such a way as to allow for questioning in terms of forms of identity, without the guise of propaganda or dogma. This approach found its most iconic form in *Untitled* (*48 portraits, 2010*), in which Helms depicted masked combatants, guerrillas and militiamen as a study of archetypical, male-militarized identity and representation. The piece took on the same proportions as Gerhard Richter's *48 Portraits* (1971-72), in which Richter reproduced images of famous men of the 20th century from encyclopedias. In Helms' piece, the images were culled from various sources and drawn in charcoal on paper thereby speaking to anonymity, distortion and the shadowy side of the history of the identities in Richter's piece.

In *Pathos Formula*, Helms seizes the impulse to categorize a visual language. Zombies, Starscapes and Memes become elements of a 'formula' of representation; as artworks created from cultural materials as diverse as found postcards, decades old issues of LIFE magazine, film stills and the Internet. Almost from the guise of an ethnographer, Helms uses this conceptual distance to utilize source material in creating works that reflect complex emotional qualities. Moving from overtly figurative work, Helms employs new approaches and formats on semi-industrial materials, screen prints and charcoal drawings on felt, free standing light box 'Pathos Fields', screen prints and charcoal on linen, as well as drawings on paper mounted to panel. When seen together, Helms' differing processes of production take on a hieroglyphic quality, appearing as though a series of visual symbols within larger veiled narratives.

Adam Helms was born in Tucson, Arizon, in 1974 and currently lives and works in New York. He was a recipient of the Rema Hort Mann Foundation Visual Grant Award, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award and was an artist in residence at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas. His work has been exhibited at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and Bilbao, Spain. Helms' work is included in the collections of the Walker Art Center, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Dakis Joannou Collection.