



Jonathan Allen
Explore Thyself
November 4 – December 18, 2011

Lu Magnus invites you to *Explore Thyself*, **Jonathan Allen's** debut solo exhibition in New York City. Opening reception for the artist is on **Friday November 4, 2011, 6-9pm**. The exhibition runs through Sunday December 18.

Explore Thyself is an exhibition of new mixed-media works by Jonathan Allen. Engaging the contemporary cultural landscape, Allen's latest body of work merges drawing, painting, and collage techniques. *Explore Thyself*, a phrase from Henry David Thoreau's book on the journey of spiritual discovery, *Walden*, suggests the expansive and open approach to media and imagery that Allen's work engenders, inviting viewers into dialogue with materials familiar to them: subway maps, sales circulars, dollar bills, advertisements, magazines and other popular periodicals. With his paintings, Allen puts a mirror up to his viewers and challenges them to pause and see the works not only as a reflection of their daily realities but also how one would transcend the quotidian urban life, spurring the viewers to question what they may still become.

Culling from art history, pop culture and current events, Allen reassembles images into surreal dreamscapes. These dreamscapes are often fragmented, abstracted and enigmatic, opening a critical window on today's political and environmental condition. Entwining these materials with painting and drawing, Allen imagistically evokes the absurdity of contemporary life and the challenges of retaining humanity amidst the alienating effects of our heavily mediated modernity. The tactility and layers of Allen's paintings reflect the complexity and the existential dilemma of the human condition. Alternately poetic and political, celebratory and critical, uplifting and dark, these works are deeply reflective of a new cultural conversation about pop culture, technology, media and what it means to be part of a larger social fabric.

Allen's visual deluge is a result of weaving the immediacy of images from various contemporary media with classical formal arrangements of monumental form and content. Architecture, the ultimate symbol of Man's presence, structures social spaces; framing isolated figures and deconstructing pop imagery, Allen deals with the issue of location, space and culture, which is forged of everyday discouragement and discontent, mitigated by either a stoic determination or an inexorable sense of optimism. In light of this collision between a romantic ideal and the often harsh reality of contemporary life, particularly in the aftermath of recent natural and man-made disasters, Allen begs the transcendental question of the legacy of the 21st century.

In the Lu Magnus project room Allen has created a 'walk-in-collage', painting and collaging the walls and ceiling with color, contemporary and vintage magazines, photographs, novels, and advertisements. Using a single convergence point as the defining perspectival structure, this space acts as an immersive, experiential counterpoint to Allen's paintings.

Born in 1975, Jonathan Allen holds a BA in Visual Arts and Art History from Columbia University. Allen has exhibited at a number of New York galleries and nonprofit art spaces, including PS122, Socrates Sculpture Park, and Exit Art. In 2008, Allen was awarded a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant. In 2009-2010, he participated in the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council *Workspace* residency. In 2010, Brooklyn Arts Press published his first artist monograph, SUPERSTRUCTURE. In December 2010, Allen's first international solo exhibition opened in Italy. Allen currently lives and works in New York City.

Pictured overleaf: Panopticon, 2011, Paint, collage & pencil canvas, 33 x 40 inches (83.8 x 101.6 cm)

Upcoming exhibitions:

Tofer Chin
Totally
January 27 – March 18, 2012

Claiborne Swanson Frank
American Beauty
March 23 – May 6, 2012