

For Immediate Release

HILARY WILDER: *NEARER TO THEE*
CURATED BY MARISA C. SÁNCHEZ

Exhibition Dates: February 21 – April 5, 2008

Opening Event: Thursday, February 21, 6-9 PM at Open Satellite

Artist Lecture: Saturday, February 23, 4 PM at the Henry Art Gallery auditorium

Open Satellite Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 12-6 PM, second Thursday of the month 12-8 PM

Brooklyn, New York and Richmond, Virginia based artist Hilary Wilder investigates painting as a construction of reality and a structure of knowledge. Working directly on the wall, whereby she inserts canvases into complex visual systems, her vibrant works critique painting as a mode of representation, specifically the concepts of the romantic, picturesque, and sublime. Through the lens of landscape, which serves as a dynamic metaphor for human experience, Wilder introduces narratives and compositions that are held in tension between fact and fiction, order and disorder, stability and chaos, and the real and ideal. Informed by Romantic landscape painters, including Casper David Friedrich and J.M.W. Turner, Wilder's impressive, large-scale installations attempt to examine the forces of nature and culture. Often depicting explosive and tumultuous scenes, her paintings are supported by a grid painted directly onto the wall, which acts to balance the drama that unfolds in the canvases. This strategy is pursued by the artist in a number of her installations, with certain motifs recurring in her work, for instance, her use of bold, geometric patterning that references 1970s aesthetics, including wallpaper designs, record covers, and other cultural artifacts that hold a personal connection in the artist's memory to that time.

In earlier work, Wilder borrowed imagery of car accidents and natural disasters from newspaper photographs, which she then painted in a highly abstract style so that the images were almost completely dematerialized and imperceptible. Even through this process of translation, her technical and conceptual skills enabled her to maintain the intensity of the devastation present in the source material. Discussing this approach, Wilder stated: "Some paintings are based on photographs, others are borne purely from imagination; in this way, they are constructed in the same manner as memories, conflating known facts with what one wishes to have been true." In this way, Wilder adheres to both realism and abstraction, two modes that allow her to critique how we shape our understanding of our environment and investigate how we perceive ourselves within that context. Wilder wrote: "Our culture abounds with subjects—particular people, places, lifestyles, aesthetics—that are romanticized and idealized, and thus draw attention to the ways in which our own experiences are, by comparison, dull and uninspiring. However, if, as T.S. Eliot wrote, culture is lived religion, it would seem that—somewhat paradoxically—we rely on these illusions to provide our lives with meaning and stability."

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For her residency at Open Satellite, Wilder has created an ambitious painting installation that is site-specific in her consideration of the space of the gallery, which provides a structural framework for her dramatic canvases. In the context of the Pacific Northwest, Wilder's thematic concerns offer a contemporary dialogue about landscapes and identity as well as a critique of place, history, and the environment.

Hilary Wilder received her MA and MFA from the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 2000 and 2001. From 2002-2004, she was a Critical Studies Fellow in the CORE Residency Program at the Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Wilder was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for 2006-2007 from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and received a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant for 2007-2008. Recent solo exhibits include, *Courting Disaster* at the Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta in 2007. Her work has been included in several group shows, including *Sirens' Song*, Arthouse at the Jones Center, Austin; *There Goes the Neighborhood*, sixspace, Los Angeles; and *New Texas Painting*, Diverseworks, Houston. More recently, she was an artist in residency at SIM, Reykjavik, Iceland. Wilder is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Painting and Printmaking at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. She works in painting, installations, and videos, and she is also a writer of art criticism. At the 2008 Annual Conference of the College Art Association, Wilder is presenting her topic "Treachery of Images" as part of a panel on "Painting and Critique in the Age of the Market." Wilder is represented by Devin Borden Hiram Butler Gallery, Houston.

About the Curator:

Marisa C. Sánchez is Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Seattle Art Museum. Beginning in late April 2007, Sánchez joined SAM's curatorial staff, working closely with Michael Darling, the Jon and Mary Shirley Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. Since February 2003, Marisa had been at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) as curatorial assistant in the photography department. She has written criticism for publications and has served on the Board of Houston's Lawndale Art Center where she also co-organized a symposium on alternative art spaces. Sánchez holds a Masters in Art History, Theory, and Criticism from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

About Open Satellite:

Open Satellite is a contemporary art exhibition hall for the Seattle metropolitan area. The residency-based program provides an opportunity for emerging and mid-career artists from outside the region to work for an extended period to create large-scale artwork in any medium. Exhibitions are staged four times annually with every fifth show focused on architecture as a critical position.

Open Satellite was formed in 2007 and is sustained by Su Development.

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