

SHAHEEN

modern and
contemporary art

Neil MacDonald *History Paintings*

May 7th – June 11th, 2010

**SHAHEEN modern and contemporary art is pleased to announce
an exhibition of new paintings by Neil MacDonald**

For his second full-scale exhibition at SHAHEEN, and first exhibition at the gallery since 2006, Neil MacDonald expands his inquiry into the visual, technical and thematic concerns that have guided his paintings of the past eight years. While the majority of MacDonald's paintings to date have derived from video stills depicting peripheral, often tranquil scenes and moments from the aftermath, cleanup and investigation of airplane crashes and environmental disasters, "History Paintings" finds the artist culling reproductions of old master paintings from art history text books and the internet, and filtering them through his systematic and consistently applied working process. The result is a visually profuse and spectacular group of mid and large scale paintings, and fully realized small scale studies based on masterpieces by Peter Paul Rubens, Tintoretto and others. "History Paintings" will be anchored by "The Battle of Lepanto (After Vicentino)", MacDonald's largest and most ambitious painting to-date. Spanning five panels and measuring 64 x 160 inches, "Lepanto" is based on 17th century Venetian painter Andrea Vicentino's mural-sized battle scene depicting the third and final Battle of Lepanto, a naval skirmish in which the Holy League earned a decisive victory over the Ottoman Empire.

Whereas the photographic source imagers for MacDonald's previous paintings have been characterized by an eerie tranquility, the images of well-known old master paintings that provide the basis for the artist's "History Paintings" series have been selected for their visual overload, chaotic energy, and dynamic compositions. By re-interpreting these images through his rigorous, even-handed painting process, the artist continues his ongoing exploration into humankind's innate need to impose order onto chaos and make sense of the unexplainable and unfathomable, and the ways in which painting, photography and other modes of visual representation serve that need. While MacDonald reminds us of the historical role that painting and other forms of visual representation have played in recording, dealing with, and disseminating information about chaotic historical events, the visual profusion, ambiguity, and erosion of imagery in his recent paintings evokes the simultaneous power of visual media to create information, distort reality and, ultimately, perpetuate alternate versions of history.

Neil MacDonald earned his BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art and MFA from Kent State University. In 2009 his work was the subject of solo exhibition at the Akron Art Museum. MacDonald currently lives and works in Stow, Ohio.

SHAHEEN is open Tuesday through Friday 11 a.m. – 4 p.m., and by appointment.

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