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PETER SACKS

Aftermath

12 September – 1 November 2014

Opening reception on 12 September 2014, 6 – 8 pm

Robert Miller is pleased to present *Aftermath*, an exhibition of new paintings by Peter Sacks. This is the artist's first solo show at the gallery.

A native of South Africa living in the United States, Peter Sacks creates a large visual narrative, embodying time, space, and human history in his densely textured compositions. His works are made by an intricate process that involves layering media sourced from geographical, historical, and political contexts. Sacks uses an original, almost ritualistic technique of combining painting, adhesion, typewriting, burning, and compressing so that the works resemble archaeological sites or debris fields. He evokes a shared history of suffering, displacement, imprisonment and exile, all implicit themes that were drawn from Sacks' experiences in South Africa and ongoing in our world at large.

Sacks applies multiple layers of materials on canvas, such as handmade lace, cloth, and threadwork, corrugated cardboard, clothing, shrouds, prison shirts, fishing nets, which he transforms by burning or painting over. Where they include textual elements, these are hand-typed by the artist on fabric using a manual typewriter and then incorporated into the overall matrix. Through this process, the artist alters our understanding of the medium of painting itself. From a distance, the canvases read as abstract and painterly, but close up, they abound with astonishing and vertiginous detail. Rigorously formal, they are at once encyclopedic yet intimate, creating a series of highly charged encounters.

Sacks' new paintings widen even further his exploration of color and materials. The typed language is used as if it were paint, as lines of writing wander through the landscape of the painting, inviting viewers to decipher traces as on a hieroglyphic wall or ruined fresco. Sources range from political, historical, ecological, and literary documents, from Virginia Woolf to the Geneva Conventions, from the poetry and prose of Zbigniew Herbert or Kafka to the writings of Gandhi and Mandela, from reports of the Red Cross from Iraq to recent data on climate change. Acts of retrieval and reconstruction, Sacks' recent series of works, titled *Aftermath*, imagines new forms of painting and the medium itself, while, as the artist says "challenging our assumptions of what might or might not be human, whether in ourselves or in the marks we make upon the spaces we inhabit, construct, deform, or save."

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue published by Robert Miller Gallery, with an essay by Rose Art Museum Director Christopher Bedford.

Peter Sacks (b. 1950 Port Elizabeth, South Africa) studied at Oxford, Princeton, and Yale University. His works are represented in private and public collections internationally, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Sacks' paintings have been the subject of articles in *The New York Times*, *Art in America* and *Artforum*. He has authored five celebrated books of poetry and numerous publications. The artist currently lives in Massachusetts and Connecticut.