



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ERIC FISCHL
RIFT RAFT
MAY 3 – JUNE 25, 2016

OPENING RECEPTION:
TUESDAY, May 3, 6-8 PM
20 East 79th Street



Skarstedt is pleased to announce *Rift Raft*, Eric Fischl's first presentation of new work at its Upper East Side gallery (20 East 79th Street), on view from Tuesday, May 3 to Saturday, June 25. Using the art fairs as a lens, Fischl further develops his study of human nature by confronting the viewer with the reality and ultimate disconnect between art and the environment in which it is situated.

Instead of the suburban scenes of his past, Fischl focuses on interactions within the opulent arena of art fairs. Both intrigued and appalled by the concept, he began to visit fairs to observe the crowd, taking his camera with him to capture snapshots of the characters that roam the booths. The figures Fischl paints are not portraits. They represent archetypes of the people at fairs: the shrewd dealers in suits, the eccentric art fans, the wearied group sitting by the refreshment area, almost all of them engrossed in their cell phones. Fischl observes: "Same crowd, different clothes. Always the same experience."¹ Meanwhile, the artworks are overshadowed by the frenzy of buying, selling, and socializing. They join the audience as silent observers of the chaotic art market on display.

The art fair paintings join the lineage of art about art throughout history. In particular, one can draw parallels between Fischl's scenes and paintings of collector's cabinets during the Dutch Golden Age, a time of booming economic activity that propelled a proportionately vigorous art market. Offering an exclusive glance inside collections, these paintings were part documentation of inventory, part elaborate narrative to flatter the taste and status of the patron, a theme that resonates today. While Fischl's paintings appear satirical, they are only partially so. They are essentially tragicomedies, in which people's desires and needs are thwarted by a system incapable of satisfying their deepest

¹ Tim Adams, "Eric Fischl: 'What America wants is artists who are doing very expensive toys'", *The Guardian*, 12 October 2014.



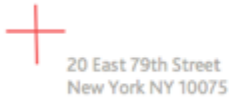
cravings. These works are not a "comment" on the art world but an existential condition most clearly articulated by the art world's irreconcilable conflict between spiritual and commercial values.

In the painting *Rift/Raft*, Fischl's series reaches a politically charged climax, as the apathy of the art world elite is juxtaposed with potent imagery of refugees in desperate need. The audience is shocked out of their apathy, being made to realize that these two worlds coexist. Fischl revisits an earlier diptych, *A Visit To/A Visit From/The Island* (1983), leaving a heavy impact on the viewer with a blunt comparison of the lives of refugees to those living in leisure. Pushing his social commentary a step further, he demonstrates the rift of the art market from the reality so many face. Fischl also alludes to Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819), and in this tour de force of composition, he commemorates the plight of the refugees in a deeply empathetic way.

This exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, featuring an essay by Tim Adams.

Image Credit: Eric Fischl, *Rift/Raft*, 2016, oil on linen, 98 x 220 inches (248.9 x 558.8 cm.)
© Eric Fischl. Courtesy of the artist and Skarstedt, New York.

About Skarstedt



Skarstedt (20 E. 79th Street, New York, NY) was founded in 1994 by Per Skarstedt to mount historical exhibitions by Contemporary European and American artists that had become the core of his specialty in Sweden and New York in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The New York gallery's program focuses on artists of the late Twentieth Century whose work explores concepts such as representation, authorship, identity, and sexual politics across a wide-range of media. Skarstedt's unique relationship with artists allows it to present exhibitions both on the primary and secondary markets, creating a dialogue between the generations.

Skarstedt opened its London space at 23 Old Bond Street in 2012 with the inaugural exhibition *Andy Warhol: The American Indian*. Skarstedt London presents exhibitions and publications devoted to the gallery's established area of expertise while also seeking to evolve and expand its focus. Skarstedt is committed to sharing both its aesthetic perspective and philosophical approach through high-quality exhibitions and collaborations with top international museums and private collections.

Skarstedt opened its Chelsea space at 550 W. 21st Street in May 2014 with the inaugural exhibition *Klein and Warhol: Fire and Oxidation Paintings*, adding to the gallery's existing locations on New York's Upper East Side and in London. The additional gallery space enables Skarstedt to expand on its core program of museum-quality, historically researched exhibitions from modern and contemporary masters.

The gallery works with the following artists and artists' estates: Justin Adian, Francis Bacon, John Baldessari, Georg Baselitz, George Condo, Carroll Dunham, Eric Fischl, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Lucio Fontana, Günther Förg, Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, Mike Kelley, Martin Kippenberger, Yves Klein, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Sherrie Levine, Robert Mapplethorpe, Juan Muñoz, Cady Noland, Albert Oehlen, Richard Prince, David Salle, Thomas Schütte, Cindy Sherman, Rosemarie Trockel, Andy Warhol, Franz West, and Christopher Wool.

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