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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Ridley Howard: Fields and Stripes” Debuts New Paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

MFA presents first solo exhibition of a Traveling Fellow from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts



Ridley Howard, *Blues and Pink*, 2012. Oil on linen. 16x18 inches. Neumann Family Collection. Courtesy of the artist and Leo Koenig Inc., New York.

(May 11, 2013) BOSTON, MA—Since receiving his Master of Fine Arts in 1999 from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (SMFA), Ridley Howard (b. 1973) has explored how 21st-century painting might capture intense yet veiled emotion. His crisp color and precise composition recall the cool psychology of paintings by Edward Hopper or Ed Ruscha; yet their soft-edged finish and votive format also suggest a romantic conviction that painting can be transporting. Howard’s delicately composed portraits, landscapes and abstractions are the focus of **“Ridley Howard: Fields and Stripes,”** on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), from May 11–October 27, 2013, in the Eunice and Julian Cohen Galleria. The paintings were created since 2011, when the SMFA awarded the artist with a prestigious Traveling Fellowship to research works by early Renaissance and Modernist painters in Italy. **“Fields and Stripes,”** organized by Jen Mergel, Beal Family Senior Curator of Contemporary Art, is the first solo presentation of an SMFA Traveling Fellow at the MFA, and the artist’s first solo museum exhibition.

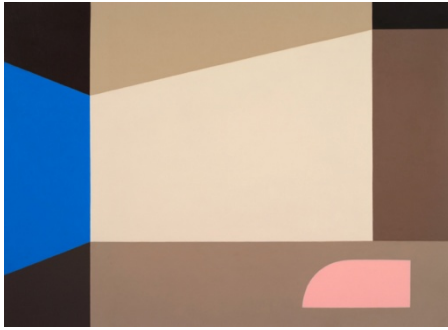
For the MFA, Howard debuts new paintings: bright stripes contour a bodice, yet also optically flatten the image; a couple’s caress balances atop a diamond-shaped color field; grey tones intensify while vibrant hues are held mute. Assembled in the vaulting concrete architecture of the MFA’s contemporary wing, designed by I. M. Pei, their condensed scale compresses sentiment into subtle, yet powerfully public, displays of affection for painting itself.

“Over the years the Fellowship program has recognized the most innovative, ambitious artists and Ridley joins a prestigious group of alumni Fellows including Nan Goldin, Mike and Doug Starn and Ellen Gallagher,” says SMFA President, Christopher Bratton. “The School’s longstanding partnership with the Museum is instrumental in providing our alumni incredible exhibition opportunities such as this. We look forward to seeing where Ridley’s career takes him next.”

As a Fellow, Howard toured Italy to consider early Renaissance paintings by Piero della Francesca and Fra Angelico, and ranging styles of Italian modernists and futurists including Gino Severini. Specifically, he was inspired by how the geometric structure in these compositions might amplify and prompt a response to the image. Howard fuses these art-historical influences with pop culture and his own experiences, memories and internet downloads. In his hands, a portrait of his wife, a sweater pattern viewed online, a movie poster, a scene glimpsed across the street—all are combined in drawings that distill several images into a single painted composition that is both intimate and deliberately undefined.

“Ridley has a unique capacity to filter historical, virtual and personal imagery into lovingly painted yet spare compositions that have an uncanny effect of being precise yet elusive, intimate yet anonymous at the same time,” notes curator Jen Mergel. “They are transporting, as Renaissance paintings might be, but without dictating where to go. That they can say more by saying less is a refreshing experience in our image-saturated age.”

Howard holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting and a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from the University of Georgia and a Master of Fine Arts from SMFA/Tufts University. His work has been included in exhibitions at



Ridley Howard, *Tan Blocks*, 2012. Oil on linen. 26x36 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Leo Koenig, Inc., New York.

institutions such as Fredric Snitzer Gallery (Miami), the The High Museum of Art (Atlanta, GA), the Knoxville Museum of Art (Knoxville, TN) and Leo Koenig, Inc. (New York). The artist has been the recipient of a grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. He lives and works in New York City.

SMFA Traveling Fellowship Program

Support for exploration and research are critical in the early stages of an artist's career and SMFA has a strong history of providing these opportunities, none more enduring than the Traveling Fellows program. Since 1894, this program has awarded funds to select SMFA artists providing support to launch individual careers through independent work, travel and exhibition opportunities. Each year up to 10 individuals are awarded fellowships by an independent jury and have approximately one year to complete travel and create new work; then their works are reviewed by a second jury and one artist is selected for a presentation at the MFA.

Related Events

Gallery Talk: Ridley Howard: Public Displays of Affection
Thursday, June 6, 2013, 1–2 p.m.
Meet at the Sharf Visitor Center (free with admission)

Join the discussion on how Ridley Howard's intimately scaled contemporary paintings can jolt the public space of the Museum with signs of emotion, sentiment, and affection. Led by Jen Mergel, Beal Family Senior Curator of Contemporary Art.

About the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston:

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), is recognized for the quality and scope of its encyclopedic collection, which includes an estimated 450,000 objects. The Museum's collection is made up of: Art of the Americas; Art of Europe; Contemporary Art; Art of Asia, Oceania, and Africa; Art of the Ancient World; Prints, Drawings, and Photographs; Textile and Fashion Arts; and Musical Instruments. Open seven days a week, the MFA's hours are Saturday through Tuesday, 10 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.; and Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 9:45 p.m. Admission (which includes one repeat visit within 10 days) is \$25 for adults and \$23 for seniors and students age 18 and older, and includes entry to all galleries and special exhibitions. Admission is free for University Members and youths age 17 and younger on weekdays after 3 p.m., weekends, and Boston Public Schools holidays; otherwise \$10. Wednesday nights after 4 p.m. admission is by voluntary contribution (suggested donation \$25). MFA Members are always admitted for free. The MFA's multi-media guide is available at ticket desks and the Sharf Visitor Center for \$5, members; \$6, non-members; and \$4, youths. The Museum is closed on New Year's Day, Patriots' Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For more information, visit www.mfa.org or call 617-267-9300.

About the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston:

Founded in 1876 and accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (SMFA), is one of only three art schools in the country affiliated with a major museum—the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Our mission is to provide an education in the fine arts—for undergraduate and graduate artists—that is interdisciplinary and self-directed. This education values cultural, artistic and intellectual diversity; it embraces a wide range of media; it stresses the development of individual vision and its relation to culture in general; it values equally the knowledge gained by thinking and doing; it is deeply engaged with the world as a whole. If the mission is constant, its practice is always transforming. For more information about our programs and partnerships, visit www.smfa.edu.

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