

## *Jan Frank: New Paintings*

23 February – 20 April 2018



Jan Frank, *Churchill*, 2017-2018, mixed media on canvas, 203 x 203 cm

Nahmad Projects is pleased to announce *Jan Frank: New Paintings*, the first solo exhibition in the UK of the New York-based artist. The exhibition will run from the 23<sup>rd</sup> February to the 20<sup>th</sup> April and will showcase new paintings and drawings in a progression from figuration to the abstract. In addition, the show will include two large-scale sculptural installations realized in the 1980s.

In the words of the art critic Adrian Dannatt, Jan “continues to embody the paradigm of the New York painter,” having been molded by friendships with American greats including Willem de Kooning and Chuck Close. The paintings expand his exploration of line, layering and repeating appropriated contours made by himself and other artists. A wall-mounted aluminium outline of Frank Lloyd Wright’s house is an early example of his appropriative method, and a mixed media installation uses video and sculpture to unpack his drawing process in space and time.

*“For more than a year I drew after the nude, finding descriptive line to put into stages of abstract configuration. This process still keeps going. I now work from a large body of existing lines, by other artists and myself. These are enlarged and screened on to the canvas.*

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*These lines are pure, they are tools. My archive of lines is very selective, a vocabulary of my own.* – (Jan Frank on the exhibition *Jan Frank: New Paintings*, 2018).

Frank's practice developed to maturity while living in New York. He experimented with various media through the 1980s, until he found a trajectory with painting in the 1990s. Influenced by his collaboration with Sherrie Levine as a student, he began to appropriate *lines* from the recent history of abstract painting around him. He lifted forms from painters he admired, such as Phillip Guston and Louise Bourgeois, and projected them repeatedly onto plywood boards to trace a web of mirrored lines in alkyd, oil, and ink. This series became known as the *Plywood Paintings*, made between 1993-1998. A subsequent series involved a Xerox machine to duplicate the lines and transfer them to large-scale paintings using screen print techniques. In many works throughout each series, certain lines recall the female body, often drawn from live drawing sessions. These suggestive outlines inject a sense of eroticism and allude to the long history of the female form in art history.

Jan has always maintained his connection with the legacy of the New York School, as the artist emphasises in this interview: "In the '70s, as a young artist, your relationship to history was so close because the art world was small—you were all literally sitting at the same table. In reality I'm not that old, but everything moves so fast now and we are all so streamlined by amnesia that I do feel I come from a different place [than] most contemporary [artists]." – (Jan Frank quoted in *Art News*, 2015). While at first glance Frank's paintings seem to have a similar appearance to New York's Abstract Expressionist icons, his starting point is critically different. The decision to use lines appropriated from other paintings is pointedly postmodern, undercutting modernist notions of individual authenticity and self-expression. His approach is decidedly contemporary by complicating our understanding of what abstract pictures can mean and where they come from.

## **Biography**

Frank was born to Dutch parents in Amsterdam in 1951 and lived in the Congo before moving to Detroit at age six. His family settled in Wisconsin, where Frank attended the University of Wisconsin–Madison and collaborated with the artist Sherrie Levine. His next move would prove to be his last stop, when he travelled to New York to attend the Whitney Independent Study Program. At the Whitney he was taught by Ron Clark, with whom he made several films, and learned from Vito Acconci and Yvonne Rainer, who influenced him to make time-based and site-specific art. He has remained in the same Bond Street loft he took upon graduating the Whitney in 1978.

The artist's most recent exhibitions include Paul Kasmin, New York (2011), Olsen / Irwin, Sydney (2012), The Merchant House, Amsterdam (2013), Nahmad Contemporary, New York (2014 and 2017).