

# PRESS RELEASE

## MCDERMOTT & MCGOUGH: OF BEAUTY AND BEING

### GHADA AMER: 100 WORDS OF LOVE

Opens Friday 7 January from 6 to 8 pm  
Exhibition continues through 12 February 2011



Cheim & Read is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by the collaborative artists McDermott & McGough. Their previous show with Cheim & Read was in 2008.

David McDermott and Peter McGough (born 1952 and 1958), are known for their creative appropriation of different historical eras and styles. Faithful to the subjects and techniques of their chosen period, the duo's multi-disciplinary work questions the nature of perception, identity, gender and nar-

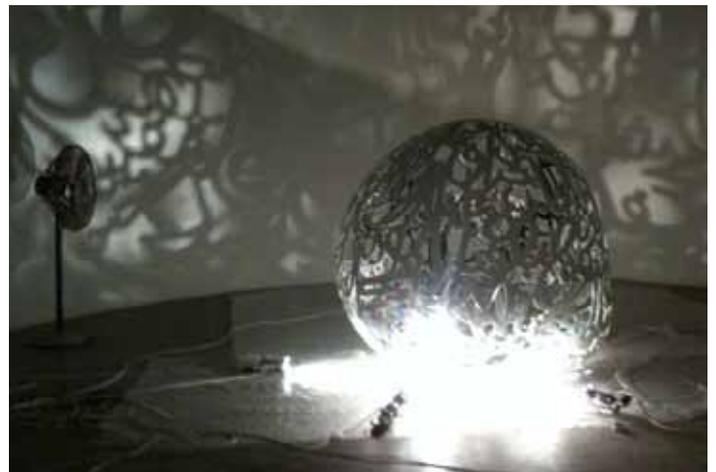
rative. Memory and nostalgia play strong roles, subtly subverted by an aura of artificiality and the artists' sly reconstruction of the past.

McDermott & McGough's recent work has looked to cultural tableaux of 1950s and 60s Americana, culling imagery from advertisements, movies and movie stars, comic books and paperback novels. Their current exhibition continues this theme, referencing imagery from 1940s – early 1950s advertisements, geared mostly towards women and a carefully coiffed, artificial world of beauty and desire. In their focus on the archetypal, mid-century American woman, McDermott & McGough construct narrative portraits, still lifes, evocative nudes and cultural and art historical references (one piece, an obvious take on Roy Lichtenstein's *Girl with Ball*, 1961, is titled *Before the Fall*, 1955, 2010).

The images, all photographs, are printed in a tri-color carbonyl photographic process, a technique perfected and made famous by the photographer Paul Outerbridge in the 1930s and 40s, and used for color advertisements in magazines. Outerbridge, a successful and innovative commercial photographer, as well as an artist, created a scandal with his color photographs of female nudes. McDermott & McGough reference the saturated hues and precise staging of Outerbridge's compositions, as well as his subjects (as in *My Song of Love*, 1955, 2010 and *Haunts My Reverie*, 1955, 2010). They also find inspiration in the commercial work of Man Ray and Edward Steichen. The inherent tension between the photographers' commercial and creative careers interest McDermott & McGough. Their advertisements were a direct result of the approach and aesthetic concerns of their artistic output; art then emulated the advertisements. Conceptually, they orient themselves as "advertisers" of a re-imagined past – an idealistic landscape at home in the American subconscious.

Representing "the struggle of what beauty presents to the individual and the power that it commands," McDermott & McGough recognize the distance between the remote, ultimately "unreal" look of their objectified subject and the contemporary viewer. In *Always Reminding Me That We're Apart*, 1955, 2010, a purple-gloved woman looks at the viewer through her fractured reflection in a compact mirror, reducing her image to a diamond-shaped wedge and further enforcing her remove from the audience – a condition strongly supported by the work's title. The search for one's own identity and existence is modeled by fantasies and daydreams. Desire for beauty is reliant on a pose.

In the gallery's dome room, Cheim & Read will also exhibit a new sculpture by Ghada Amer, entitled *100 Words of Love*, 2010. The piece is comprised of one hundred Arabic words for love. Calligraphic intertwining of letters creates an open, lace-like lattice form around a hollow interior. This work, like other works by the artist, reference domesticity, society, beauty and abstraction, and, consequently, the stereotypical gender roles found within these themes. Amer also addresses the Western media's portrayal of Arabic society as aggressive and associated with war. Having lived and worked in New York for over twenty years, Amer straddles both cultures – the Middle East of her youth and modern day America. The tension of this dichotomy sustains her awareness of how we see others and ourselves, and has been a long-standing influence on her work. Amer's work will also be on view simultaneously at Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha.



For more information please contact the gallery at 212-242-7727

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