

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY
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PIOTR UKLAŃSKI: *BIAŁO-CZERWONA*

Thursday, March 27 – Saturday, May 17, 2008

Opening reception for the artist: Thursday March 27th, from 6 to 8pm

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce *BIAŁO-CZERWONA*, an exhibition by Piotr Uklański. This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

"Biało-Czerwona" (white-red), referring to Poland's bi-colored flag, is a nationalist slogan as familiar to Poles as "Red, White, and Blue" is to Americans. Uklański's title unites diverse works that engage typical imagery of his native Poland and play on the red/white palette.

Although *BIAŁO-CZERWONA* is, on one level, authentically Polish, in its use of populist decorative traditions and political symbols alluding to the country's not-so-distant Communist past the exhibition is also a highly stylized performance of identity. In international contexts such as the 2004 Bienal de São Paulo, Uklański has represented Poland; elsewhere he has been labeled a "New York artist" or an "international artist": The art world demands that artists disavow their cultural authenticity one moment and embrace it the next. Uklański recognizes just how powerful this fluidity can be and uses this occasion to embody simultaneously the roles of international artist, *Gastarbeiter*, new American, and patriotic Pole.

Throughout the exhibition, Uklański utilizes cheap materials to create works that draw on the celebratory ambitions and aggrandizing stagecraft of political events. By fusing such propagandist gestures with vernacular techniques and materials borrowed from popular folk traditions—exemplified in *Szopki Krakowskie* (Christmas crèche scenes) and a site-specific mosaic fashioned from ceramic dishware—he conjures an idealized vision of his homeland. Not only does Uklański exploit the "exotic" quality of these indigenous forms; by reifying their very ordinariness, he elicits beauty from the confines of lo-fi objects. At once monumental and humble, collective and individual, profound and banal, theatrical and genuine, the works in *BIAŁO-CZERWONA* advance Uklański's ongoing project to create deliberately unstable political, formal, and symbolic meaning in art.

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Piotr Ukiński was born in 1968 in Warsaw. Recent solo exhibitions include *Summer Love: The First Polish Western*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2007); *Piotr Ukiński: A Retrospective*, at the Wiener Secession, Vienna (2007); and *The Joy of Photography* at the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Strasbourg (2007). He currently lives in New York and Warsaw.

A fully illustrated artist's book accompanies this exhibition.

For further information please contact the gallery.