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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **April 23, 2001**

EXHIBITION: **RAOUL DE KEYSER "Come on, play it again"**

DATES: **May 9 – June 16, 2001**

GALLERY HOURS: **Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM**

Opening on Wednesday, May 9, the gallery will present new paintings by Belgian artist **Raoul de Keyser**. The exhibition, entitled *Come on, play it again*, is the artist's first solo show at the gallery.

Raoul de Keyser's work has been shown internationally since the early 70's. It has received wider recognition since its inclusion in Documenta IX in 1992. A catalogue raisonné of the artist's paintings made between 1980 and 1999 was published last year as an accompaniment to a traveling retrospective, currently on view at the Renaissance Society in Chicago. Over the last decade, De Keyser's paintings were included in international group exhibitions such as: *Trouble Spot. Painting* (MuKHA, Antwerp, 1999); *Unbound; Possibilities in Painting* (Hayward Gallery, London, 1994); and *Der zerbrochene Spiegel. Positionen zur Malerei* (Kunsthalle, Vienna and Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, 1993).

The exhibition of Raoul de Keyser in the gallery features 10 new paintings dating from the year 2001. In 2001 we have the luxury to look back at the history of painting in the 20th century. This history, really the history of Modernist painting, is rather violent, full of breakthroughs, manifestos, ideologies and dogmas. Looking at this century however from the vantage point of the last 20 years, this violence is difficult to fathom. Amazingly enough painting is alive and well and any attempts to regulate it through theory or ideology have failed. To a younger generation the great Greenbergian picture plane was seen, if not as comical, as slightly incomprehensible. Raoul de Keyser's work could be presented as a case study for both the contradictions of 20th century painting as well as its very potential.

De Keyser, born in 1930, has lived through a solid three quarters of the 20th century. His work matured slowly and really came into its own in the late 70's, almost in sync with the decline of the Modernist rhetoric. In his work, De Keyser manages to merge opposite elements such as figuration and abstraction, gesture and geometry, the garish and the restrained. Yet his work is certainly not an eclectic (or, Postmodern) collection of earlier styles. Rather his work celebrates the fundamental possibilities of painting and its autonomy.

Particular to the illusionistic space that painting offers is the tension between figure and ground. De Keyser's work examines this tension by giving these two elements an equal status. The ground is applied deliberately and has a peculiar depth, reminiscent of human skin. The overlaying figure, circles, lines, spots or blurs, certainly qualify as abstraction, yet still within the logic of the composition, they teeter on the verge of figuration. The paintings themselves are light and they retain an air of spontaneity. Every work is a singular event and it is obvious that their compositional balance is fragile; one wrong stroke of the brush and the work can fail.

De Keyser claims for himself a particularly privileged space within painting. His work is like a fountain, constantly creating new possibilities for itself and for the artist. Since it occupies the realm of esthetics, it is itself completely autonomous and not a messenger for any specific cause. His project is truly a playing field. Come on, play it again.

The gallery has published a full-color, 32-page catalogue in conjunction with the exhibition, with an essay by Hans Rudolf Reust. For further questions, please contact the gallery at 212 966 9074.