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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **September 27, 2005**

EXHIBITION: **Luc Tuymans: *Proper***

DATES: **October 14 – November 19, 2005**

RECEPTION: **Friday, October 14, 2005, 6:00 – 8:00 PM**

Opening on Friday, October 14th, David Zwirner will present new paintings by Belgian artist Luc Tuymans. A pivotal artist in the field of contemporary painting, Tuymans has shown extensively in Europe and the United States. This will be the artist's sixth solo exhibition at David Zwirner. In 2004, Tuymans' work was the subject of a major retrospective at the Tate Modern in London, which traveled to the K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, Germany. The Wexner Center for the Arts and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art will mount the artist's first US retrospective in 2008.

This exhibition will include 10 new paintings, in which Tuymans puts forth the image of a fragile America and the crumbling state of current affairs. There is a sense of delayed trauma, depicted in flat, muted hues, that shuns the obvious and circumvents easy interpretation. With a similar intensity to the exhibitions *Mwana Kitoko*, 2000, in which he examined the colonial history of Belgium, and *Fortune*, 2003, which centered on the effects of images from 9/11, Tuymans offers a critique of America that is intended to be subconsciously constructed. While there is nothing overt or merely symbolic about these paintings, they lay claim to real events, suppressed memories, and, in this case, the reality of our current political dilemma.

Inspired by war-time musical films from the 1940s, the central concept of the exhibition is a state of confusion derived from inconclusive memories and the dissolution of the familiar. In musicals, the subsequent chaos that is created by dancing (even when carefully choreographed) creates constant, yet dislocated, visual confrontation. For Tuymans, each painting in the exhibition presents a fragmented glimpse of a disjointed whole; his aim is to make the audience consider each image, the opposite of each image, and the uncertainty that follows. The exhibition's title, *Proper*, is in itself an aberration. While it refers to a seemingly requisite order determined by society at large, it simultaneously suggests the opposite – *improper* – and therefore subverts the notion of correctness as it relates to social and societal expectations. In these paintings, things as they “should be” are indefinite, memories are questionable, and perception is clouded by a juxtaposition of narrative and ambiguity.

In a key painting, we are confronted by the cropped, larger-than-life-sized face of Condoleezza Rice. Prompted by a remark made by a Belgian official, in which Rice was described as “strong; not unpretty,” Tuymans' portrait of Rice forces us to reevaluate a known public figure within the parameters of the still image. In *The Perfect Table Setting*, a perfectly-arranged dinner table evokes early Americana, reiterating a de rigueur aesthetic and establishing a social context for many of the other works on view. In *Ballroom*, the image of an empty dance hall underscores a lack of festivity – mediocrity tempered by the absence of dancing – and in *Ballroom Dancing* a single couple sways over the state seal of Texas at the Governor's Ball. In other paintings, it is the sense that something has just happened, or is about to, that suggests a fragile or ephemeral state – the eerie face of a Medieval statue; the dust cloud following the demolition of a building, with a New York City street lamp barely visible; an oval mirror reflecting a solitary lamp; the top of a canopy bed in which the cropped composition is eerily reminiscent of the water line from a flood. In the painting entitled *Timer*, we are reminded by a tiny red light that, at any moment, things can go terribly wrong – or, at the very least, that change is inevitable.

The paintings in *Proper*, slowed down media images deadened by Tuymans' palette and stripped of connotations, fully contest optimism. Tuymans intentionally uses discomfort as a formal device – uncomfortable viewpoints, extreme cropping, anemic hues – the result is the bleak reality we know is lurking just below the surface.

An illustrated catalogue will be available. For information, please contact the gallery at 212-727-2070, or visit www.davidzwirner.com