

# UNTITLED

30 Orchard St, NY, NY 10002  
info@nyuntitled.com  
+1 212 608 6002

**Joshua Neustein**

***Boss***

**October 28 – December 16, 2012**

UNTITLED is excited to present *Boss*, Joshua Neustein's first solo exhibition in New York in two decades.

Neustein is a New York-based artist whose practice has, from the start, utilized drawing, painting, earth works, photography, performance, installation, film and project-based work. In his ongoing material explorations, Neustein has persistently engaged an economy of process that has become a kind of signature, in which fresh materials – as well as studio detritus – are restaged and emerge as the artwork itself. Neustein has produced an incredibly forward-thinking body of work and in this exhibition we focus on one narrative of his production.

For his show at UNTITLED, Neustein takes as his starting point *Me and My Box* – a photographic series from 1973 (not exhibited) in which the artist's body interacts and intervenes in various ways with a pair of cardboard boxes – and *Shear Stress*, a painting first shown at Mary Boone Gallery in 1978. In *Shear Stress*, two canvases hang side by side, their edges 'un-hemmed', supported by wooden stretchers as by prosthetic extensions. To that date, Neustein had been known for his works on paper and the deconstructed painting was not received warmly. Nonetheless, perhaps that exhibition provoked a sea change; since that time, a vernacular has developed of the exposed stretcher and the manipulated canvas. Thirty-odd years later the artist is still at work deconstructing canvases and stretchers and putting them back together, his work on canvas coexisting symbiotically with his practice in paper.

The exhibition also includes recent works on polyurethane sheets. Initially just material used to protect the studio from the spillage of paint, the plastic tarp and the studio marks it bears is absorbed into the painting practice and becomes the focus of the art object. In *La Femme Enfant*, a stretched raw canvas with cut out squares is reduced to a grid, and the stenciled squares on the plastic sheeting underneath make up for the void cut from the fabric and reformatted canvas and polyurethane. *Little Canvas Anatomy* acts as the counterpart to this, echoing the grid on the wall.

It would be a gross misunderstanding to see Neustein's work purely for its formal qualities. Two forces are constantly at odds in *Boss*, the *assertion* of control (as in the punctiliously deconstructed canvas interventions) and *admission* – both to the impossibility of control, and the humiliation inherent in uncontrollability. Control is what is at stake in this work. The small canvases on the floor – appearing sad, embarrassed – sit uncomfortably on a fragment of soiled, 'marked' tarp. Next to it is a toy high chair with a rudimentary 'transformable' feature. In contrast, in *For Monogram*, two muted paintings lean against an upright chair that is cordoned in by a stretcher frame. While *For Monogram* glances back towards toward the possibility of a heroic painting, with its titular reference to Rauschenberg's seminal combine, and its nuanced engagement of compositionality, the embarrassed little canvases seem to blush at the thought.

Joshua Neustein was born in Danzig, Poland in 1940. His extensive exhibition history includes solo shows at the Royal Museum Ontario, Canada (2009), the Rose Art Museum, at the Brandeis University, Waltham, MA (1998), the Albright Knox Museum, Buffalo, NY (1992) and at Mary Boone Gallery, NY (1978) to mention just a few. In 1995 he represented Israel at the Venice Biennale. His work was most recently featured in *Drawings in the Margins*, a survey of the artist's drawing practice at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, Israel (May – October 2012) and one of his early installations was included in *To the Ends of the Earth* at MOCA, Los Angeles and Haus der Kunst in Munich, Germany (2012).