

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Regen Projects
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GLENN LIGON: Text Paintings 1990-2004

September 11 – October 16, 2004
Opening Reception: Saturday, September 11, 5-7 pm
Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10-6 pm

Regen Projects is pleased to announce the first solo exhibition in Los Angeles of the New York-based artist, **Glenn Ligon**. The show will be a survey of **Ligon's** text paintings from 1990 to the present. While **Ligon** has been working over the past 15 years in various mediums, in many ways the text paintings are viewed as the touchstone of **Ligon's** work. These paintings examine the tradition of black narratives (in this exhibit, through borrowed writing or stand-up comedy), adopting a range of devices from a heavily impastoed style to the formal constructs of Conceptual art. The text paintings began in the early 90s as an investigation into race, sexuality and identity, reflecting **Ligon's** own experience.

"From the earliest to the latest work, the artist suggests that a person's identity is multifaceted and only understood in relation to the larger social picture. By appropriating material from a wide range of sources – moving back and forth between 'high' and 'low', from popular to arcane, historical to contemporary – **Ligon** explores how his own identity intersects with, is filtered through, and is ultimately shaped by the social and political narratives of American culture, past and present. Starting with civil rights placards and moving through literary texts by such writers as Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Jean Genet and Richard Dyer, **Ligon** also turns his attention and analytic skills to the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe, the jokes of comedian-actor Richard Pryor, nineteenth-century slave narratives, and the investigative crime reporting of the *New York Times*." (Tannenbaum, Judith, **Glenn Ligon: Unbecoming**, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 1997.)

In most instances, the materials used to translate the text to canvas are as important as the content of the text itself. In the late 90's series, *Untitled (Stranger in the Village)*, **Ligon** constructed the text of James Baldwin's "Stranger in the Village" essay from coal dust. In discussing his use of coal dust as a material, **Ligon** explains that it "... was very visceral and bumped up the physicality of the text, but at the same time obscured the text.... Coal dust is an interesting material for me because it's beautiful; it's a black, shiny material, but it's also a waste product ... leftover from coal processing.... I am drawn to it because of all of the contradictory readings it engenders. Worthless. Waste. Black. Beautiful. Shiny. Reflective. I think it's interesting also because Baldwin takes this sense of perceived negatives being black, being gay, and being poor and sees them as 'hitting the jackpot.' It is from that position, that of the outsider, from which you can actually say the most." (**Glenn Ligon: stranger**, The Studio Museum of Harlem, New York, NY, 2001.) More recent paintings in this exhibition employ brightly colored oilstick and gesso, animating the surface and giving them a visual acidity contrasting with the harsher content of Richard Pryor's jokes.

Glenn Ligon has been the subject of solo museum exhibitions at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Studio Museum in Harlem, and the ICA in Philadelphia. Monographs were published in conjunction with each of these exhibitions. **Ligon** has been included in international group exhibitions such as Documenta XI and the 1997 Venice Biennale, and has received numerous arts awards. In conjunction with this exhibition, Regen Projects is publishing a book with an interview by Malik Gaines. An opening reception for the artist will take place on Saturday, September 11th, from 5-7 pm. For further information, please contact Shaun Caley Regen or Lisa Overduin at the gallery at 310-276-5424.