

Karen Finley

Nation Building

October 24 – December 1, 2007



From the *Dreams of Laura Bush (Anna Nicole)*, 2007
Ink on paper, 9" x 20"

Alexander Gray Associates is pleased to present an exhibition of visual work critiquing the Iraq War by renowned performance artist Karen Finley. Including works on paper and installation, *Nation Building* was shown early in 2007 with critical acclaim at Boston's Emerson College, where she was the 2007 Artist-in-Residence. Finley's exhibition with Alexander Gray Associates coincides with Performa 07, the biennial of performance by visual artists taking place throughout New York. She will be performing her new solo work, "WAKE UP!" each Sunday night at 7 PM at The Green Room (45 Bleecker Street) through November 18, 2007 (for tickets, visit www.telecharge.com)

The exhibition includes two bodies of drawings, in Finley's signature pen-and-ink style. In the first group, *The Dreams of Laura Bush*, Finley channels the First Lady's unconscious through illustrations and text that imagines inner psychological conflicts, incorporating sexual fantasy, popular culture, and current political events. Imagining the personal lives of the White House and their Freudian impact on global politics, Finley satirically morphs the personal and the political. In one journal entry, Laura Bush writes to her husband, begging him to go to therapy for help with his depression, "You have destroyed the trust of the nation, but do you have to destroy us, too?" A second suite of drawings considers another powerful female political figure its subject. Media images of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice are extracted and analyzed, isolating wisps of hair, eyes, hands and shoes, transforming familiar gestures into small figure studies reminiscent of post-Impressionist sketchbooks. In a large-scale graphic work, Rice's eyes are dropped as bombs from a military plane, transforming Iraq war imagery into a Surrealist landscape.

An installation made of rope occupies the gallery's main wall, consisting of nooses based on Sadaam Hussein's execution. At first glance, this dense arrangement of ropes reads as a single textile work, evoking Eva Hesse's sculptural work and 1970s craft-oriented Feminist work. In this installation, Finley questions the cancerous way that violence breeds more violence. While specifically rooted in the former Iraqi dictator's death, Finley is also interested in what was familiar about the image of Hussein being noose-hung—images of the Salem Witch trials and KKK lynchings, for example—placing global capital punishment further into an United States context. In the same space, a media-based installation continuously polls the deaths in Iraq; one station showing the names of U.S. soldiers who have died; the second, a list of Iraqi citizens whose death count has gone largely unnoticed by the U.S. public.

New York-based artist Karen Finley is best known for her riveting and visceral solo performance work, which were at the center of the Culture Wars in the United States of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Using her voice and her body, these performances left an indelible impact on audiences, channeling rage and mourning around the AIDS crisis, violence against women, war, and censorship into personal and emotional expression. Her visual art has been exhibited internationally, and is in the collections of the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. She is the author of numerous books, including *A Different Kind of Intimacy* (Thunder's Mouth Press, 2000) and *George and Martha* (Verso Books, 2006). She has been recognized with an honorary Doctorate degree from the San Francisco Art Institute, two Bessie Awards, an Obie Award, and in 1998 was named Ms. Foundation's Woman of the Year. Finley is currently a professor of art and public policy at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

Alexander Gray Associates is a contemporary art gallery and advising firm based in New York. Our exhibition program focuses on mid-career visual artists who emerged in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Through consulting and collection advising, we provide expertise for our individual and corporate clients. Our ultimate goal is to provide a direct experience with Modern and contemporary art that encourages discourse around art's role in the advancement of culture. Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11:00 AM–6:00 PM.