

WES HEMPEL

September 30 - October 25, 2014



Wes Hempel, Burying the Evidence, oil on canvas, 72 x 52", 2014

George Billis Gallery is delighted to present the solo exhibition of work by Wes Hempel. The exhibition will run from September 30th through October 25th, 2014. The opening reception will be held at the gallery located at 525 West 26th Street between 10th and 11th avenues on Thursday, October 2nd, from 6-8 pm.

Wes Hempel portrays his vision of masculinity through the juxtaposition of contemporary art and historical play. Using the psychological demeanor found within the portraits of present-day men and placing them in similar backdrops that resemble paintings of the historical Neoclassical era. Hempel's work creates the perfect blend of provocative dialogue of historical references with familiar modern day aspects.

The exhibition features paintings where contemporary figures showcase the artist's interest in masculine sexuality and its representation throughout art history. Hempel writes of his work, "A walk through any major museum will reveal paintings that depict or legitimate only certain kinds of experience. Despite the good intentions of critical theorists questioning the validity of the canon, paintings of the old masters on the walls of museums like the Met, the Louvre, Rijksmuseum still have a certain cache. They're revered not just for their technique but because they enshrine our collective past experience. Of course, it's a selected past that gets validated. Con-

spicuously absent to me as a gay man is my own story. By presenting contemporary males as objects of desire in familiar looking art historical settings, I'm able to imagine (and allow viewers to imagine) a past that includes rather than excludes gay experience-and ride the coattails, as it were, of art history's imprimatur."

Wes Hempel received his MA in painting from the University of Colorado in 1988 and has exhibited extensively throughout California, Colorado, Florida, New Mexico, and Washington. His work has been published in Naked Men Too, The Humanist Tendency, Southwest Art, and The Nude Male: 21st Century Visions.

The George Billis Gallery marks its 18th year in the Chelsea Art District and its sister gallery is located in the gallery district of Culver City in Los Angeles.



Wes Hempel, Forecast: Affection, oil on canvas, 48 x 56", 2014

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