

GREY ART NYU GALLERY

Contact: Alyssa Plummer
212/998-6782 or alyssa.plummer@nyu.edu

A Spirit of Hard-Won Optimism Prevails in Contemporary Art in the Exhibition
Damaged Romanticism: A Mirror of Modern Emotion

**On view at the Grey Art Gallery, New York University, from January 13 to April 4, 2009
and at the Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY, from February 7 to April 11, 2009**

New York City, November 25, 2008—*Damaged Romanticism: A Mirror of Modern Emotion* brings together the work of 15 internationally recognized contemporary artists, whose work explores the confrontation between classic, highly idyllic romanticism and contemporary, pragmatic realism.

Damaged Romanticism revolves around a seemingly simple premise—powerful, positive artwork can spring from profound disappointment. It captures the complexity of contemporary reality by giving form to intricate, even contradictory sentiments, placing rebellion, disillusionment, and defiance side by side. Works on view in the exhibition—paintings, sculpture, installations, photographs and videos—explore varied subjects such as nature, the modern landscape, the human body, identity, relationships, and spirituality, presenting artists' multilayered responses to the world.

The first exhibition to be jointly presented by the Grey Art Gallery in New York City and the Parrish Art Museum in Southampton, *Damaged Romanticism* will run concurrently at the two institutions, opening January 13, 2009, at the Grey and February 7, 2009, at the Parrish.

According to Terrie Sultan, Director of the Parrish Art Museum and an organizer of the exhibition, “The artists in *Damaged Romanticism* do not belong to a style or school in the traditional sense, but they share an outlook that helps define the spirit of our times. Like the original Romantics, who so powerfully transformed the arts and society two centuries ago, they keenly feel the damage wrought by the forces of modernity and by our divorce from the natural world. But the fantasies of these damaged romantics are tempered by a pragmatic realism. Their sense of disillusionment and loss never stops them from clinging stubbornly to hope.”

Artists whose work is included in the exhibition are Richard Billingham (England); Berlinde De Bruyckere (Belgium); Edward Burtynsky (Canada); Sophie Calle (France); Petah Coyne (United States); Angelo Filomeno (Italy/UnitedStates); Jesper Just (Denmark/United States); Mary McCleary (United States); Florian Maier-Aichen (Germany/United States); Wangechi Mutu (Kenya/United States); Anneè Olofsson (Sweden); Julia Oschatz (Germany); David Schnell (Germany); and Ryan Taber/Cheyenne Weaver (United States).

Although the works shown in *Damaged Romanticism* are rooted in suffering and misunderstanding, they reject resignation and sorrow in favor of tough-minded optimism. In contrast to the elegiac spirit often found in classic Romanticism—famously expressed in the 20th century by F. Scott Fitzgerald, in his claim that there are no second acts in American lives—these artworks propose that heartbreak can be the ground for renewal. Built on the knowledge that rebirth grows out of experiences of things gone wrong, the notion of healing in *Damaged Romanticism* is couched in the recognition that the future can be better than the present. In the face of a contemporary reality marked by political instability, economic insecurity and social isolation, these artists present slivers of life in all its complexity and complication while offering glimpses of reconciliation grounded in observation, profound realism, and belief in the potential of self-empowerment.

Damaged Romanticism: A Mirror of Modern Emotion was organized for Blaffer Gallery, the Art Museum of the University of Houston, by its former Director, Terrie Sultan, now Director of the Parrish Art Museum; David Pagel, Assistant Professor of Art Theory and History, Claremont Graduate University; and Colin Gardner, Professor of Critical Theory and Integrative Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara. The exhibition and publication are made possible, in part, by the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, the Cecil Amelia Blaffer von Furstenberg Endowment for Exhibitions and Programs, the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, Ellen and Steve Susman, Continental Airlines, and the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The presentation of *Damaged Romanticism* at the Parrish Art Museum has been made possible, in part, through generous support from Sandy and Steve Perlbinder, Martha B. McLanahan, and Lyn and Sam Schwab. The presentation at the Grey Art Gallery is made possible in part by the Abby Weed Grey Trust. Public programs are supported by the Grey's Inter/National Council.

###