

## SPENCER SWEENEY

Lives and works in New York

### Education

1993-97 Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia PA  
-Certificate undergraduate degree  
Lewis S. Ware Memorial Prize for experimental work  
Jimmy C. Leuders painting Prize  
Angela Pinto Memorial Prize for experimental work  
Cuff/Sammack Prize for abstract painting  
Lucile Sorgenti Scholarship for artistic excellence

### Exhibitions

2006 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (cat.)  
AMT Gallery, Como, Italy

2005 "Looking at Words: The Formal Presence of Text in Modern and Contemporary Works on Paper," Andrea Rosen Gallery  
Gavin Brown's enterprise, NY  
The Modern Institute, Glasgow, UK  
"Drunk Vs, Stoned 2," Gavin Brown's enterprise  
"Red White Blue," Spencer Brownstone Gallery, New York

2004 "Subway Series" Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York

2003 "My People Were Fair and Had Cum in their Hair," Team Gallery, New York  
"Today's Man", John Connely, New York  
"Karaoke Death Machine", Daniel Reich, New York  
"Works on paper," Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York

2002 "20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibition," Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York  
"Paintings: Steve DiBenedetto, Spencer Sweeney, and Joe Zucker," Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York

2001 American Fine Arts, New York  
Hysteria Glamour, Tokyo

2000 "21<sup>st</sup> century group show", Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York  
"Legal Paper Work", Beyond Baroque

1999 XXX-Mas show, American Fine Arts (Curator Colin Deland)  
Lawing gallery, Houston ,TX  
"CrissCross: Some Young New Yorkers 3", PS 1 Contemporary Arts Center, NYC  
- Installation and series performance  
"Paradise 8" Exit Art, NYC  
- Installation and performance  
- Curated by Kenny Schacter  
Preview Party for John Waters opening, American Fine Arts Gallery, NYC  
- performance  
- Curated by Colin Deland

## Exhibitions (cont'd)

- 1999            Preview Party for Gary Gross, American Fine Arts Gallery, NYC  
- performance  
- Curated by Colin Deland  
"Free Coke", Greene Naftali gallery, NYC  
- performance & video installation  
- Curated by Carol Greene
- 1998            "Beyond the Matter of Space" , Beyond Baroque  
"Hey, You Never Know" NYC  
- performance  
- curated by Carol Greene
- 1998-97        "Gift land" Printed Matter, NYC
- 1994-93        Subculture Gallery Phila., PA  
- member of gallery Co-op bi monthly shows  
- curated by David Schwartz

## Bibliography

- 2006            Richter, Aaron, "Santa's Party," BlackBook, Nov./Dec., p. 52  
Peter Plagens, "The Art of the Deal," Newsweek, March 6, pp.56-58  
Saltz, Jerry, "Biennial in Babylon," Village Voice, March 1  
Sweeney, Spencer, "Work in Progress," V magazine, Spring, 2006 pp. 124-25  
Iles, Chrissie and Philippe Vergne, Whitney Biennial: Day For Night, exhibition catalog, published by The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- 2005            "Crazy in Love", Paper. February, p. 44 (ill.)
- 2003            Pearson, Jesse, "I Do This, I Do That," Parkett, No. 69, pp. 180-188
- 2003            Lee. Carol, "Into the Groove," Paper, May, p. 62
- 2002            Review, Village Voice, December 4  
Lee, Carol, "Youth Gone Wild," Paper, November, p. 30  
Smith, Roberta, review, New York Times, November 30
- 2000            "A Pose is Worth a Thousand Pictures," Made in USA, Fall/Winter, pp. 40-46  
Review, New Yorker, July 31, p. 12  
Review, Art Text, May-July, p. 80  
Interview, Self Service, Spring/Summer, pp. 230-236
- 1999            Review, Art Forum, October, p. 40  
"Changes Aside. SoHo is Still Very Much SoHo," New York Times, February 12, p. 37  
McCraw, Gary, "Null New York," Music Magazine, pp.56-57

"From his role as the only non-female in the seminal "fake," rock band Actress (was it an artist, the American Fine Arts gallery house band, a protest against the boredom of nightlife, a fashion show with noise?) to his recent production of dance records under the name Housing Projects, Spencer Sweeney has always exploited the allure and excitement of music in order to get attention and remake his public persona. Meanwhile, his exhibitions of paintings and drawings throughout the past few years have revealed - by turns - an anarchic, wild boy sensibility reminiscent of Kippenberger/Oehlen or early Peter Saul and, in his daily pen and pencil drawings, an elegant graphic approach that seems to channel both the visionary hand and ear of William Blake

and the precision social caricatures of 19th century dandy Constantin Guys. Whether dealing with images or sounds, Sweeney's primary concerns are the corrosive and emancipatory potentials of public exposure, and the tactical re-appropriation of pop and sub-cultural codes in order to turn them back against the homogenizing force of the very culture he takes them from. In his case, music and painting are not the parallel occupations of an information age multi-tasker, they are interchangeable, throw-away stances in an urban milieu that always manages to put us to work no matter how bored or lazy or confused we in fact are. Music is an escape from the laborious piling up of static fine art objects. Painting is a rejection of the entropic time of bars and clubs. Neither is enough but together they can be almost too much, and in Sweeney's art this double activity creates a zone of indistinction where the limits and definitions of each practice are constantly blurred and redrawn. Sweeney proposes a model of work that is less about professionalism and the fabrication of signature products than the ecstatic unworking of a subjectivity always already put to work in the non-stop consumption of lifestyle choices. It is a kind of impassioned indifference to styles and forms that allows him to elaborate the joyful and perverse distances he opens up between his role as a cultural producer and the steady output of new sensations and perceptions. Whether concocting psychedelic illustrations of impossible, hybrid life-forms (drag queen scat-skaters, cum guzzling Jesus impersonators, etc.) or creating raucous, multi-layered canvases - sometimes prissily rendered in rainbow hues, other times piggishly thrown down in drunken strokes of black or white or physically pierced by plastic flowers, Sweeney unleashes new and unexpected worlds ^ more scary and more free ^ in energetic compositions devised from the ruins and fragments of this one.

Since his brush with death in a rickshaw accident in October of 2003, Spencer Sweeney has reassessed his role as a cultural producer in a world where everything changes except the fact that nothing much happens anymore. Sweeney's post-rickshaw moment is one of cold-eyed clarity, a time of looking forward and inward, a time to dig deeper into the crates and into the mud of subjectivity. In order to lay hold of it there where it is made to happen and destroy it one more time, in order to re-appropriate its constant destruction and begin again from there."

-John Kelsey