

GREENE NAFTALI

For Immediate Release:

Guy de Cointet

January 20 – February 14, 2009

Greene Naftali is pleased to announce an exhibition of drawings by Guy de Cointet. This will be the first solo presentation of the artist's work in New York since his untimely death in 1983. Born in Paris in 1934, Cointet lived briefly in New York before relocating to Los Angeles in the late '60s. There he worked alongside conceptual artists such as William Leavitt, Paul McCarthy, and Allen Ruppersberg. His highly enigmatic practice synthesized text, drawing, painting, and theater—and his interest in fashion and play with linguistic and geometric codes set him apart from his contemporaries and has influenced the object-performance works of a later generation of artists including Mike Kelley.

The drawings on view represent the wide range of Cointet's visual styles. His pictorial forms would often take shape through the transposition of text into visual design. Taking a readymade phrase from popular culture—be it an overheard conversation, a line from a TV soap opera or a magazine, an advertising slogan, or a literary quote—the phrase was then either scripted in beautiful mirrored handwriting and adorned with surrounding graphic decorations (arrows, pyramids, etc.), or was geometrically translated letter by letter into a unique code of colorful interlocking lines. The confluence of a highly aestheticized beauty and a formally rigorous structuralism in these works is exemplary of Cointet's practice in general, and points to his merging of European and L.A. sensibilities.

Cointet's performance works began in the early 1970s, first as dramatic readings of his nonsensical books written in his own invented languages and often delivered by a beautiful, well-dressed actress. This form then developed into increasingly complex solo performances in which the actress would deliver a scripted monologue while interacting with and elucidating one or more prop-objects, often symbolizing paintings or books. His later works were large multi-actor stage plays, appropriating the tone and dialogue cues of domestic soap operas, but set in environments of colorfully monochrome geometric forms. As with the drawings, Cointet's performance works foreground the possibilities for activating complexly seductive visual-verbal relationships—the tenacious adhering of language to shapes and forms.

A video of Cointet's solo performances is on view in the exhibition, and on Wednesday February 4th at 7pm, the gallery will present three key theatrical works, "Two Drawings," "Going to the Market," and "My Father's Diary," with a rare appearance by their original actress Mary Ann Duganne Glicksman, who will be arriving from Paris.

For more information please visit www.greenenaftaligallery.com.