

## SHERRY FRUMKIN GALLERY

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EXHIBITION ANNOUNCEMENT

### ALEX DONIS

*Pas de Deux*



*September 8<sup>th</sup> – October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006*

*Opening Reception Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup> from 6 – 9 pm*

Sherry Frumkin Gallery is pleased to announce "Pas de Deux", a solo exhibition of new work by Los Angeles artist **Alex Donis**. The exhibition opens with a reception on Saturday, September 16th from 6 to 9 pm and continues through October 21, 2006.

In this new painting series, begun in 2003, Donis pairs the unlikely partners of soldiers from opposing battlefields in poses of classical ballet, expanding on the visual language he began in the controversial "WAR" exhibit that was first commissioned for the re-opening of the Watts Towers Art Center then censored, by the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department. (The cancelled exhibition of 14 paintings of LAPD officers and gang members doing hip-hop moves together went on view shortly afterwards at Frumkin/Duval Gallery in Santa Monica as "WAR: The Last Dance Reinstated".)

Richard Meyer, associate professor of Art History at USC, and author of *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (Oxford, 2002) comments regarding "Abdullah and Sergeant Adams" (2003), a painting featuring a US Marine partnered with an Iraqi soldier, "No other art form idealizes sexual desire like ballet. By refusing the simple route of making an obscene sexual image, Donis has made a far more powerful one, about desire and purity and the aspiration for peace and communion with our enemies." (Art Papers Nov. 04)

Donis' history of provocative work begins with his infamous pairing of same sex kissing couples from the 1997 exhibition "My Cathedral" at the Galeria de la Raza in San Francisco. In a matter of weeks two paintings from the exhibition were destroyed by vandals causing a wave of media and public demonstrations along with the largest attendance record in the gallery's history.

Donis says, "Machismo has been at the heart of my investigations for several years now. Trying to understand communities of men and how they interact is of key interest to me. I first thought of this new series "Pas de Deux" on the eve of September 11, 2001 as I installed the paintings from "WAR" (2001) at the Watts Towers Arts Center. "This idea that dance could be used as a metaphor to understand and somehow erase hatred is of great interest to me. I began researching images from early ballets in old books on the Ballets Russes, American Ballet Theater and the Royal Ballet. These frozen postures from choreography long since forgotten seemed the perfect ground for this new project."

The new works pair enemy soldiers from a variety of historical conflicts including World War I & II, the US Civil War, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and the Burundi-Rwanda Civil War among others. The dance poses are from an assortment of ballets as obscure as "La Fille Mal Gardée" and as well known as "Giselle".

## ALEX DONIS

### Biographical Notes:

Alex Donis is a Los Angeles-based visual artist whose work examines and redefines the boundaries set within religion, politics, race, and sexuality. Interested in toppling societies, relationship to culture and images, his work is often influenced by a tri-cultural (Pop, Latino & Queer) experience. He has worked extensively in a variety of media including painting, installation, video, and works on paper.

He was born in 1964 in Chicago, IL and was educated at a Catholic school in East Los Angeles, an east-coast prep school in Massachusetts, and a military academy on the southern coast of Guatemala. He received his undergraduate degree at California State University, Long Beach and his graduate degree from Otis College of Art & Design.

Donis has exhibited his work at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art & Culture; the Santa Monica Museum of Art; the Longwood Art Center, New York; the Geffen Contemporary (MoCA); the Laguna Museum of Art, Laguna Beach; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE); the Mexican Museum, San Francisco; Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago; Galeria de la Raza, San Francisco; Columbia University, New York; and Artspace, Sydney Australia. His work was included in the landmark exhibition "Made in California: Art, Image, & Identity 1900-2000" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

His work has been featured in *FlashArt International*, *Art Papers*, *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. His work is part of the 2 volume anthology, *Contemporary Chicano/Chicana Art in the United States*, published by the Bilingual Press of the University of Arizona, Phoenix and in *Potentially Harmful: The Art of American Censorship*, published by Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA.

Alex Donis has also been awarded residencies at the University of Texas, Austin; the Brandywine Institute, Philadelphia; Artspace, Sydney, Australia; and at 18th Street Arts Center in Santa Monica, CA. He is represented by Sherry Frumkin Gallery in Santa Monica, CA.