

**SPERONE WESTWATER**  
257 Bowery New York 10002  
T +1 212 999 7337 F +1 212 999 7338  
[www.speronewestwater.com](http://www.speronewestwater.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Jonathan Lasker:**  
**Drawing and Painting**  
30 October – 13 December 2003

Sperone Westwater is pleased to announce “Drawing and Painting,” an exhibition featuring Jonathan Lasker’s recent drawings, along with three paintings that emphasize the element of draughtsmanship in the artist’s work. Although the Reina Sofía devoted a room to Lasker’s works on paper during his retrospective earlier this year, this is the first major exhibition in New York to focus exclusively on his drawings.

Lasker’s endeavor to produce meaning through the act of picture-making is characterized by the doodles, scrawls, and scribbles that distinguish his work. Ostensibly, such doodling is Abstract Expressionism taken to its limit: what is a doodle, if not the unadulterated expression of the subconscious? And yet, the fact that each finished canvas is preceded by several careful studies presents the viewer with a slippery paradox. Far from being a record of the mind’s unmediated passion, these are highly calculated works whose sensibility is more classical than romantic or expressionistic. This paradox is one of the most important aspects of Lasker’s work: taking their cue from the rehearsed loops and premeditated meanderings of their surface, his paintings are simultaneously spontaneous and deliberate, jocular and grave, coarse and elegant, gestural and geometric.

While Lasker’s drawings invoke many of the pictorial themes addressed by his paintings, they achieve quite a different effect. Unlike the artist’s studies for larger canvases, which serve the same function as a sculptor’s maquette, these finished works on paper are autonomous creations, and have no direct correspondence to other works. Moreover, as documents which display simultaneously the first and last steps of the creative process, they reveal certain aspects of Lasker’s work that are necessarily absent from the execution of his canvases. Indeed, while some of these drawings are planned as carefully as their painted counterparts, others originated more spontaneously, when the artist simply began to draw. Finally, while one of Lasker’s defining tropes is the juxtaposition of thick impasto with thin, flat lines, the absence of paint has forced him to recognize and accentuate contrast elsewhere. He plays repeatedly with different densities of mark-making, covering light, colorful squiggles with dense black grids of India ink, or creating absences through the technique of erasure.

Lasker has chosen three paintings to complement his drawings, each with an emphasis on line. In these works, he incorporates linearity into the figure/ground relationship by contrasting the dense and tangled lines of the background with the dominant line of the foreground. Clearly, Lasker is a painterly draughtsman and a draughtsmanly painter, and this exhibition’s juxtaposition of finished paintings and drawings serves to better illuminate the work of one of the most important artists exploring the possibilities of abstract pictographic language today.

The Lasker retrospective which took place at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid from June through mid-September has subsequently traveled to the Kunstsammlung

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Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, where it will run through 23 November 2003. Catalogues from both museums are available. For more information, as well as photographic images, please contact Katharine Smyth at (212) 999-7337, or at [info@speronewestwater.com](mailto:info@speronewestwater.com).