

# BETTY CUNINGHAM GALLERY

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## John Lees

May 16 – June 22, 2013



*Clown (Beachwood Canyon),*  
2001-2012, Oil on canvas  
16 x 10 in.

New York, NY – Betty Cunningham Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings and drawings by John Lees, opening on May 16<sup>th</sup>. This will be the artist's third solo show at the gallery, located at 541 W. 25<sup>th</sup> Street, between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenues. The artist will be present for an opening reception on Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup> (6 – 8PM); the exhibition will remain on view through Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Lees characteristically spends years working and reworking his paintings and drawings. The build up and sanding down of paint, tears, patches and even written diary logs of dates are among the physical reminders of the lengthy time spent on each painting. Although the works in this exhibition are recently completed, many were in fact started decades ago.

John Lees paints as if his paintings were recurring dreams. In this exhibition, Lees' dreams include: simple dreams such as an Umbrian landscape or swaying treetops; childhood dreams of Dilly Dally - an early TV character with whom Lees identified, or of Rte 66 – his family's escape route to the West Coast; and psychological dreams, particularly one of the lonely clown as painter. More complex memories come into play in his portraits: one of his mother, *Mater*, started in 1979 and completed in 2012, and another of Lees father, *Man in an*

*Armchair* – a subject of more than one painting in this show. In two works featuring the Metropolitan Museum Cloisters' angel, Lees has transformed earlier 'stream' paintings into the flowing Romanesque angel. Memory moves to form - the stream - and the form moves to meaning - a Romanesque angel. Throughout, for Lees, the media is as deep as the memories and vice versa.

Lees is the recipient of numerous awards and grants, including the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Hassam, Speicher, Betts, and Symons Purchase Fund Award; the Francis J. Greenburger Award; the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Grant; and the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship Grant. His work can be found in a host of public institutions, most notably the Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI; the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, MA; The Kemper Collection, Kansas City, MO; the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; and The New Museum, New York, NY.

John Lees was born in 1943 in Denville, NJ. He received his BFA and MFA from the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, CA. He has been exhibiting in New York since 1977 and has been an instructor at the New York Studio School since 1988. He lives and works in upstate New York.



*Walking on Treetops*, 2012 Oil on canvas, 9 ¼ x 15 1/8 inches

*For further information, artist biographies, and/or images, please contact the gallery.*

**Listing Information:** Betty Cunningham Gallery is located at 541 West 25 Street, New York, NY 10001  
T: 212.242.2772 F: 212.242.5959 E: info@bettycunninghamgallery.com W: www.bettycunninghamgallery.com

**Public Transportation:** C, E to 23<sup>rd</sup> Street

**Gallery Hours:** Tues – Sat, 10am – 6pm

**Next exhibition:** Beverly McIver, *New Paintings* June 27 - August 9, 2013

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