

**Pia Dehne** is a German artist residing in New York. Her paintings are hyper-realistic in the vein of Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulated reality: a condition engendered by man's need to understand (and replicate) every aspect of life in an orderly, inorganic fashion. Tonight, she opens a new exhibit called *Vanishing Act*, illuminating a little optical synergy between man and nature in the form of camouflage. We spoke to Pia about her big night tonight at The Charles Bank Gallery, as well as a few other tricks up her sleeve...



(Fighter Jet, 2011, Oil on canvas, 90 x 78 in.)

**The Standard:** You work in many different type of mediums – photography, performance art, painting?  
**What type of artist would you describe yourself as in a nutshell?**

Pia Dehne: I'm a painter. I like to use different media like performances, photos, and installations as inspirations for my paintings.

**Where were you born, and what were your parents like growing up?**

I grew up in Germany, Dusseldorf. My parents are from the revolutionary '68 generation. They fully supported me as an artist.

**When did you first catch the art bug? Can you remember an early memory?**

My uncle who was a child book illustrator, noticed my talent to draw when I was about 4 years old and allowed me to paint a 10 foot clown at the wall of our back yard.

**What is the one overarching question you seek or reflect in all your shows, including this one?**

My work has changed over time but my paintings are like optical illusions – hyper-realistic and abstract at the same time – confusing the observer's distinction between subject and object, form and content, the real and the imaginary, waking and sleeping, ignorance and knowledge, and good and evil.

Who would you say are new artists that are catching your attention now in terms of pushing boundaries, and make you most excited today?

I'm inspired by exceptional timeless paintings like Balthus, Lucian Freud, Giorgio Morandi, Edward Hopper, Gerhard Richter, Artemisia Gentileschi and many more. In the art world right now, I feel it's all about trying to break boundaries so desperately that it becomes boring... although I have to say that I like Urs Fischer, **Maurizio Cattelan** and Dirk Skreber.



(Red Leaf Hunter, 2011, Oil on canvas, 90 x 78 in. From Vanishing Act Exhibit)

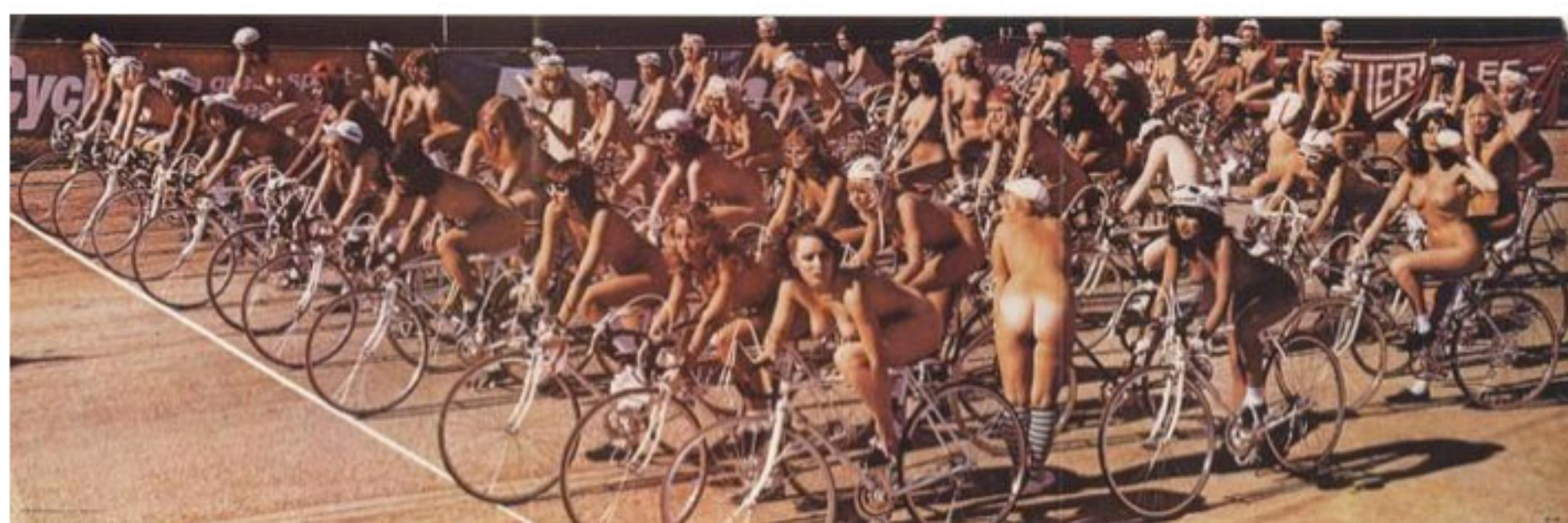
Tell me bout the “aha” moment when you first realized the inspiration for your new show would be camouflaging? And what do you mean by camouflaging characteristics?

I used the motif of camouflage already in my last two shows. For me there's pleasure in seeing nature's optical illusion strategies. I find the beauty in nature to be the most fascinating aspect of mimicry and camouflage.

There is a pure visual pleasure, unconnected to nature, as well. For example, to see physical objects dissolve into color and abstract forms, and how capable we are to create the beauty from the beast – like the dazzle ship designs from World War I and II, modern jet fighters, and digital big game hunting patterns for clothing.

By using the aesthetics of camouflage patterns in my work, I also reflect on how camouflage becomes a fetish in our society. The urge to hide, suppress, changing identity, are all aspects of camouflage. I'm also interested in the question of whether phenomena like masquerade, transvestism, and gender-switching can be read as forms of mimicry and camouflage.

By recreating Queen's bicycle album poster as a photo and performance, I realized that this was already an act of camouflage and gender switching. The nude suit I designed appears more naked than actually being naked in a US metropolis such as NYC.



(Original Portrait of Queen's 1978 Poster inside the album *Jazz* with "Fat Bottomed Girls") – look familiar? It sure does if you've visited they gym at [The Standard, Downtown LA](#) recently.



I want to Ride my Bicycle, New York City 2006

(Pia Dehne's Recreation for Deitch Projects)

**We fondly remember your recreation of the infamous Queen bicycle photograph. Where does the portrait reside today for others to enjoy?**

The photograph was published in *V Magazine* in the Summer issue of 2007. I would like to show the remaining documents of the bicycle project along with my more recent work to show how optical illusions, Trompe-l'œil and camouflage symbolizes the interconnectedness – the urge and desire to merge with your surroundings, loose sense of self, and become one with the space around you, and become free from alienation and suffering.

**After your show is all over, do you plan to take a break and relax? If so, where?**

My work is a permanent vacation. I'm constantly developing new ideas for my next project.

### Whats next on your plate in terms of work?

### Meditating