

SPERONE WESTWATER
257 Bowery New York 10002
T +1 212 999 7337 F +1 212 999 7338
www.speronewestwater.com

Malcolm Morley
Rules of Engagement
31 March – 30 April 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York, NY: 4 March 2011 - Sperone Westwater is pleased to present its fourth solo exhibition of Malcolm Morley, entitled *Rules of Engagement*. The show will include twelve new paintings as well as the rarely shown monumental painting *Rat Tat Tat*, 2001, from the “Picture Plane” series, 1998-2001. The new works depict images of fighter pilots and airplanes, classic motifs in Morley’s oeuvre since the early 1990s. A master of the painterly, Morley portrays aerial combat in powerful, dynamic, and bold scenes of movement and action.

In the “Fighter Pilot (Ace)” series, Morley paints prominent American, Belgian, English, German, Italian, and Russian pilots inspired in part by illustrations found in books for young adults around the Second World War. *English Fighter Pilot (Ace)*, 2010, features a portrait of James Edgar Johnson with two airplanes—one with a blown engine—in a flat, illustrative style and with minimal spatial depth. In the bottom right corner, the word “CLASSIFIED” is painted in red. These canvases were created from memories of planes and models from Morley’s childhood; as he recalled: “I lived near an air dome [airport]. One of my hiding spots was a hole in the ground where I used to sit and watch the airplanes overhead, and that for me was bliss.” An underlying theme in his work continues to be spectacle. Morley stated in 2009:

I witnessed spectacular spectacles as a child in London during the Blitz in World War II, as Spitfire and Messerschmitt fought dogfights overhead with the fighter planes crashing into defense balloons and searchlights crisscrossing the night sky. When I was evacuated to a Devon boarding school, I saw a lifeboat and torpedoed freighter. The themes of dogfights and sinking freighters have become icons for me.

Strafing, 2010, depicts a military aircraft skimming the surface of the water in the midst of an air attack. The lush cerulean blues of the water contrast sharply with the bright oranges, yellows, and greens of the other airplanes exploding overhead. Morley’s loose and energized paint handling gives this work the look of a vibrant watercolor. *Rules of Engagement*, 2011, illustrates several planes flying in an upward curve against a light blue sky. At a closer look, Morley has attached a thin paintbrush to the canvas to represent machine gun fire from a plane.

On the main wall in the first floor gallery, and measuring 8-feet in height, is *Rat Tat Tat*, 2001, a large-scale rendering of model World War I fighter planes based on postcards found in a catalogue for model-plane enthusiasts. The ready-to-be assembled flattened airplane parts with colorful abstract patterns of diagonals, camouflage, and targets are Morley’s playful exposition on the relationship between two and three dimensions, painting and sculpture, high and low art.

Born in London in 1931, Malcolm Morley studied at the Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts and the Royal College of Art. In 1958 he moved to the United States. In addition to being awarded the inaugural Turner Prize for British artists in 1984, Morley has had numerous solo exhibitions, including retrospectives at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1993); Fundación “la Caixa,” Madrid (1995) which traveled to Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst, Oslo (1995-96); the Hayward Gallery, London (2001); and the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, Florida (2006). Morley’s work is in public and private collections worldwide, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; National Gallery of Art, Washington DC; Tate, London; and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid.

An opening reception for the artist is from 6-8 pm on 31 March. A catalogue with a text by Brooks Adams will be published on occasion of this exhibition. For more information and images please contact Anne Bruder at +1 (212) 999-7337 or anne@speronewestwater.com. Please find further documentation on our website www.speronewestwater.com.

This exhibition runs concurrently with *Robert Barry: Recent Mirrorpieces*.