

LYONS WIER GALLERY

542 West 24th Street • New York • NY • 10011

JAMES RIECK

ColorSafe

October 9 – November 8, 2014

Opening Reception

Thursday, October 9th

6 - 8pm

Lyons Wier Gallery

542 West 24th Street

New York, NY 10011

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James Rieck, *Colored Cotton Blends*, 2014
Oil on canvas, 54 x 64 in / 137 x 162.5 cm

READ LABELS WITH CARE

James Rieck's newest body of work, "**ColorSafe**," is a continuation of his earlier paintings sourced from clothing catalogs but with a focus on color and pattern. These 'vintage' images come with all sorts of inferred ideas about the aspirations of the American dream, often from a white, middle-class, conservative perspective. Rieck's paintings are constructed from images used by mainstream department store catalogs from the late 1960s / early 70s. This was a particularly turbulent time for social change in this country, yet here on the pages of these traditional catalogs, where time often seems to stand still (frozen), a shift was taking place. This was a new era in American history, where white models and models of color were standing side-by-side in equal status as if they were friends and having fun - posing in pairs, laughing, joking and sharing secrets. Given the racial divides of the time, were they just acting/modeling then or was there actual camaraderie? Did we believe them, or did we just want to believe them? Rieck conceptualizes these idyllic moments via the loaded content about race and class that ensues. Issues that we as a culture are still working through today.

"ColorSafe" is an exploration of the use of color and the language of color. Historically, color, because of its rarity (particularly in painting) represented wealth and class. However, thanks to industrialization, color is now ubiquitous and the use and meaning of color has shifted to represent an expression of inner feelings and identity. Today's brightly printed catalogs, as well as the hotly hued products they advertise, bring a feeling of aspiration to the viewer and illustrate a bright future. Expressive people are seen as "colorful." A full spectrum of colors represents all emotions. But the simple term 'color' or even 'colored' is complicated. "Separate whites from coloreds" is interpreted very differently when not read on a garment label. The language of clothing, both in description and care, can carry with it unintended implications when taken out of context. By using these terms as painting titles, these phrases amplify the subtle racial tensions embedded in our vocabulary. "Bleaching", "separates", "whites only", "with like colors", "mixed blends" are all loaded terms that seep into our everyday experience of 'dirty' laundry. Rieck's paintings are not intended to be didactic: they are simply a reflection of the fabricated environments we encounter in advertisements every day. They are not a nostalgic perspective, because this place has never existed - yet!

James Rieck earned both his MFA and his BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and the Glasgow School of Art, Scotland. Rieck's paintings have been exhibited across the United States. Museum and group shows include: "We Could Be Heroes: The Mythology of Monsters and Heroes in Contemporary Art" at Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, "Size Does Matters," curated by Shaquille O'Neal, the Flag Foundation, New York, "As Others See Us: The Contemporary Portrait," Brattleboro Museum, VT, and at the Corcoran Museum, Washington, DC. His work is present in the Burger Collection, the Bollag-Rothschild Collection, Switzerland, and the Chadha Collection, The Netherlands, among others. James Rieck lives and works in Los Angeles and has been represented by Lyons Wier Gallery since 2003.