

THE PACE GALLERY

PRESS RELEASE

Press Contacts

Jennifer Joy / Sarah Goulet / Lauren Staub
jjoy / sgoulet / lstaub@thepacegallery.com
212.421.8987

FRED WILSON

Venice Suite: Sala Longhi and Related Works

March 17 – April 14, 2012

510 West 25th Street, New York

Major acquisitions of Wilson's work announced by nine museums



Detail from *Sala Longhi*, 2011

NEW YORK, February 28, 2012—The Pace Gallery is pleased to present *Venice Suite: Sala Longhi and Related Works*, the first major solo exhibition of new works by Fred Wilson in the United States in six years. The exhibition further explores Wilson's relationship with Venice and the rich tradition of glass making in the city. Wilson represented the United States at the 50th Venice Biennale with his solo exhibition *Speak of Me as I Am* in the American Pavilion in 2003. The artist's work was subsequently featured in two exhibitions of *Glasstress*, shows coinciding with the 53rd and 54th Venice Biennales, which highlighted examples of historical and contemporary glass by visual artists. *Venice Suite: Sala Longhi and Related Works* will be on view from March 17 through April 14, 2012.

The centerpiece of the Pace exhibition will be Wilson's *Sala Longhi* (2011) an installation inspired by an 18th-century cycle of paintings by Pietro Longhi in the Sala Longhi at the Museo del Settecento Veneziano Ca' Rezzonico in Venice. Installed in Venice during the second iteration of *Glasstress* at the Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti at the Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti during the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011, this is the first time that Wilson's *Sala Longhi* will be on view in the United States. The installation is comprised of twenty-eight black glass panels and a larger central panel from which an elegant, white Murano glass sconce protrudes into space. Wilson has cut into the black glass, leaving vacant shapes in the otherwise unmarred surface, which correspond with the faces of the Venetians in Longhi's paintings.

Longhi's depictions of domestic scenes and social life precede the fall of the Republic of Venice in 1797 and the subsequent occupation by Napoleon's armies. Wilson explains that "perhaps I felt an analogy to our time in Longhi's work. I first saw the Longhi room in 2009. Prior to the fall of Lehman Brothers in September 2008, New York, like Longhi's Venice, had been awash with excitement and excess—there seemed to be both endless money and opportunity. I remember that I felt a dark economic cloud loomed on the horizon. I wondered to



From left: Fred Wilson, Detail from *Sala Longhi*, 2011; Pietro Longhi, *Domino on a visit*, c. 1760, Museo del Settecento Veneziano, Ca' Rezzonico, Venice, Italy, Cameraphoto Arte, Venice / Art Resource, NY.

myself if that cloud would engulf New York as well. I looked around me and no one seemed to notice the slow-moving storm. So I just put my mask back on and joined the crowd."

Wilson's first work in Venetian glass—a large-scale black Murano glass chandelier (*Speak of Me as I Am: Chandelier Mori*, 2003) was installed in the vaulted central entrance of the American pavilion during his solo exhibition at the 50th Venice Biennale. **This exhibition will include Wilson's third chandelier, *To Die Upon A Kiss, 2011***, the title of which derives from Shakespeare's *Othello*. The seventy-inch tall chandelier is the first to feature a tonal gradation, which shifts from transparent and light to opaque and dark.

Iago's Mirror, an eighty-inch opulent black Murano mirror from 2009, will also be on view. The work was exhibited in the inaugural *Glasstress* at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009. Wilson worked with Venetian craftsmen to develop an innovative process for layering traditional Murano glass mirrors together and also conceived of a technique that reversed the centuries-old mirror making tradition—etching and painting the verso black rather than silver—in order to lend a ghostly appearance to the reflection that the mirror casts. The title of the mirror refers to Iago, Othello's ensign in Shakespeare's Venetian tragedy. **Works comprised of drips of Murano black glass will also be installed in the gallery, appearing to seep out of the gallery walls.** Their imagery can be read as representing water and oil, blood and semen, sweat and tears.

The Tate recently announced the acquisition of Wilson's *Grey Area* (1993), *Ota Benga* (2008), and a suite of twenty-nine paintings from 2011 representing the flags of nations of Africa and the African diaspora. Since 2006, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Brooklyn Museum; Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Miami Art Museum; Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University; the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, and the Toledo Museum of Art have acquired works by the artist.

In 2011, the London-based Ridinghouse published ***Fred Wilson: A Critical Reader***, an anthology of critical texts and interviews covering the artist's pivotal projects and exhibitions to date. The 512-page anthology brings together

reviews, interviews, and essays from sources that are largely out of print, as well as archival material such as invitation cards, installation views and book covers, as well as excerpts from significant exhibition catalogues.

Fred Wilson (born 1954, the Bronx) has created site-specific installations in collaboration with museums and cultural institutions throughout North America, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. His work encourages viewers to reconsider social and historical narratives and raises critical questions about the politics of erasure and exclusion. Wilson received his B.F.A. from the State University of New York, Purchase in 1976, and was awarded Honorary Doctorates from Northwestern University, IL (2007) and Skidmore College, New York (2009). Wilson serves on the Board of Trustees of the Whitney Museum of Art, The Sculpture Center, and the American Academy in Rome. His many accolades include the prestigious John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Grant (1999), among others.

Wilson's work has been the subject of numerous solo and group exhibitions worldwide, including the critically acclaimed *Mining the Museum: An Installation by Fred Wilson*, sponsored by the Contemporary Museum at The Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore (1992-93) and *Fred Wilson, Objects and Installations 1979-2000*, a retrospective organized by the Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture at the University of Maryland, which traveled to seven venues nationally from 2001-4, including Andover, Berkeley, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Saratoga Springs, and ending its run at the Studio Museum in Harlem.

This year Wilson was named the honoree and keynote speaker of the third annual deFINE ART, a global art program organized by Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). In conjunction with this honor, Wilson created an artistic intervention using works from the Walter O. Evans Collection and source material from historical institutions throughout the city of Savannah. The installation, entitled *Life's Link*, will be on view at the SCAD Museum of Art from February 21 through June 3, 2012. An exhibition of Wilson's work is also currently on view at Rena Bransten Gallery in San Francisco (through March 31, 2012).

Wilson's installation *Liberty/Liberté* (2006) was recently unveiled at the New-York Historical Society following a three year renovation of the institution's landmark building at 170 Central Park West (at 77th Street). Visible through a broad wall of glass at the building's entrance, the installation is one of the central components of New-York Historical's new Robert H. and Clarice Smith New York Gallery of American History. The work was originally conceived for New-York Historical's 2006 exhibition, *Legacies: Contemporary Artists Reflect on Slavery*.

Fred Wilson lives and works in New York City. He has been represented by The Pace Gallery since 2004. For more information about ***Venice Suite: Sala Longhi and Related Works***, please contact the Public Relations department of The Pace Gallery at 212.421.8987. For general inquiries, please email info2@thepacegallery.com; for reproduction requests, email reprorequest@thepacegallery.com.

###