

NEWS RELEASE**Contact:**

Bruno L. David, Director
 Bruno David Gallery
 3721 Washington Blvd.
 St. Louis, MO 63108
 Phone: +1 314 531 3030
 info@brunodavidgallery.com
 brunodavidgallery.com
 Wed – Sat 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

DAMON FREED: Calm, Cool, Coherent
Opening Reception:
Friday, March 6, from 6 to 9 pm
MARCH 6 – APRIL 4, 2009

Project Room | LARRY TORNO: When is a Doll not a Doll?
 Front Room | MARIO TREJO: Catharsis
 Media Room | TIFFANY SHLAIN: The Tribe



**BRUNO DAVID GALLERY PRESENTS NEW PAINTINGS BY DAMON FREED
 IN FIRST SAINT LOUIS EXHIBITION**

SAINT LOUIS, MO, February 15, 2009 — “Damon Freed: Calm, Cool, Coherent” at Bruno David Gallery is the first solo exhibition of the artist’s work in Saint Louis. On view in the Main Gallery from March 6 to April 4, 2009, the show will include the most recent paintings by the artist over the last two years. Freed belongs to a new generation of landscape artists whose work combines abstraction with explorations of the connection and interaction between man and nature, mind and spirit.

Damon Freed’s work investigates the relationship between soft and hard edges, and an ordered way of seeing shape and form. Taoists referred to this way of thinking as “perception of the nature of things; soft and weak overcoming hard and strong.” Those who concentrate on the hard edges are attracted to strength. Those who concentrate on the soft centers are attracted to weakness. To perceive the soft, one must overcome the hard. The hard edge functions as an obstacle and the soft brushwork a void.

Damon Freed’s work is influenced by classical landscape painting from China, Japan and Korea, as well as Chinese Taoist and Zen philosophy. Both Asian landscape painting and philosophy picture man within nature, not separate from it. Daily living seems to position man in conflict with his environment, but in reality, he is always in absolute harmony with the necessary push and pull of the process of nature. Freed visualizes this feeling of balance in his painting through abstraction. Shape is the formal strategy by which this meaning is expressed, and the brushwork and color bend with the shapes. The early seventeenth-century Chinese landscape painter T’ang Chih-ch’i describes the feeling: “Brushwork pertains to the refined, untrammelled style and spirit, which should be harmonious, pure, and agreeable.”

Damon received his M.F.A. from Hunter College, New York, and a B.F.A. from the School of Visual Arts, New York. In 2002, he received the Juan Gonzales Award.

A fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Nancy Weant accompanies the exhibition.

(OVER)

In the **Project Room**, photographer **Larry Torno** presents a new series of photographs titled “When is a Doll not a Doll?” The series began during the summer of 2007 when Torno was offered the opportunity to photograph an extensive collection of a vintage American toy: the renowned Barbie Doll. By experimenting with composition and light, the artist infuses “personalities” into otherwise lifeless plastic, and the photos of the famous figure evolve from simple documentation to a kind of portraiture. Although it is impossible to deny the semblance of personality that Torno has captured in these photographs, he explains that these images are not truly portraits because the human qualities necessary to impart insight into character are absent in the plastic figurines. The spectator may have a hard time believing this, however, given the convincing attitude and ambiance that accompanies the icon. His photographs are enhanced by Barbie’s breadth of genre and depth of style, as there is always another posh model waiting for her close-up. Through these vivid images of the timeless figure, Torno liberates Barbie from her box and places her again into the realm of the imagination.



The exhibition corresponds with the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Barbie Doll. Barbie, created by Mattel co-founder Ruth Handler, was unveiled at the American Toy Fair in New York on March 9, 1959. A fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Kara Krekeler accompanies the exhibition.

In the **Front Room**, **Mario Trejo** presents a new series of works, titled “Catharsis”, which visually explore macro and microcosmic struggle through manic mark-making. Trejo’s work is a meticulous accumulation of idiosyncratic marks that, at a distance, appear as dark and ethereal cosmic forms, but upon closer inspection reveal themselves as an expanse of scratches that crumble into a Promethean struggle. The hundreds of thousands of marks create illusion of an emerging form, exhibiting the artist’s conscious and sensitive attention to both detail and entirety. The drawings begin to expose small universes, each a relic of the arduous performance of repeated gestures. Trejo reconciles personal experience with the ideas of control and disorder in conceptual layers. The compulsive mark-making reflects the eternal battle between the artist and his surroundings, but the product becomes a facsimile of the sublime remoteness of the universe in miniature, revealing at once loneliness, futility, chaos and uncertainty. The artist aptly describes his work as a metaphor for imperium under which we all reside.



Mario Trejo received his B.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and his M.F.A. from the San Francisco Art Institute. He has had several shows in the southwest as well as the mid-west, sat on an artists’ panel in 2008, and will be the exhibitions director for the Museum of Pocket Art in 2009. Trejo currently lives and works in Illinois.

In the **Media Room**, celebrated filmmaker **Tiffany Shlain** presents an 18-minute short film titled “The Tribe.” This unorthodox film, an unauthorized history of the Jewish people, and the Barbie Doll all focus on a fact about Barbie – that she was the creation of Ruth Handelman, a Jewish-American woman – and turns it into a powerful metaphor about assimilation and Jewish identity in the 21st Century – both in America and abroad.



Tiffany Shlain is a filmmaker and speaker, director of The Moxie institute and founder of The Webby Awards. Tiffany’s career is guided by a passion for unraveling complex ideas in unorthodox, highly entertaining ways. Her work ranges from the internet to politics to religion and genetics. Her previous films include “Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Happiness” (Sundance Selection 2003), a powerful exploration of women’s rights in America, that aired on the The Sundance Channel and won many awards. As a director for both theater and film, she has worked with actors including Peter Coyote, Harrison Ford and Alan Cumming. She is currently developing a feature film and art installation work that investigates how changes in sexual reproduction via nature, culture, politics or science have far-reaching consequences in the complex global ecology. She will develop this project this fall at The Headlands Center for the Arts, where she is an artist-in-residence.

Tiffany is a graduate of the University of California Berkeley (1992) where she was selected as a valedictorian speaker and received the highest award in art, The Eisner Award for filmmaking. She studied film theory at UC Berkeley and film production at NYU. She lives and works in San Francisco. For more information, please visit tribethefilm.com

For further information and visuals, please contact the gallery or visit our website at brunodavidgallery.com.

ABOUT THE BRUNO DAVID GALLERY

Established in 2005, the Bruno David Gallery is a contemporary art gallery and one of the most important places to see art in Saint Louis. The Gallery represents some of the best artists that Saint Louis has to offer, along with artists of national and international reputation. The editors of the St. Louis Magazine awarded the Gallery: *Best Gallery in St. Louis* in 2008. The gallery is located in the heart of the Grand Center arts district, directly opposite the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts and the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

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3721 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD SAINT LOUIS MO 63108 314.531.3030
INFO@BRUNODAVIDGALLERY.COM WWW.BRUNODAVIDGALLERY.COM

