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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

PETER STICHBURY
THE PROTEUS EFFECT
10 SEPTEMBER – 30 OCTOBER 2010



ESTELLE 5, 2010 ACRYLIC ON LINEN, 23 ½ x 19 ¾ in.

OPENING: Friday, 10th of September, 6 - 8 PM

Tracy Williams Ltd. is pleased to announce Peter Stichbury's first solo exhibition at the gallery and the Auckland-based artist's first solo exhibition in North America. In *The Proteus Effect*, Stichbury presents five paintings and a suite of prints which reflect the metamorphosis that occurs through digital self-representation via the use of avatars and invented personas.

Stichbury's subjects possess an unearthly, distorted countenance—their visages are devoid of life and instead exude a chilling sterility and distance that echoes the airbrushed simulation and uncanny perfection prized in postmodern conceptions of beauty. These portraits do not depict individuals, rather archetypal personas; his subjects are culled from contemporary media and pop-cultural imagery, spanning vernacular sources such as glossy fashion magazines, advertising campaigns, yearbooks and online fashion model go-sees. Consequently, the overarching flatness and superficial patina seem to defy traditional notions of portraiture, as they do not embody a sense of expressiveness, character or emotional valence. Rather, these highly-stylized portraits represent anthropomorphic façades that are as much elusive enigmas, ones that mirror the very fabrication that occurs when creating an idealized virtual identity within such social environments like Facebook, Second Life, and Chat Roulette.

Like the Greco-Roman sea-god Proteus, known for his ever-shifting, mutable form, Stichbury has chosen subjects that function as magnified, real world avatars, constantly morphing to increase status, affiliation, event or social cause. Such portraits of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and Vimeo designer Zach Klein, elicit larger questions surrounding the role authenticity and interpretation as manifest in both authentic and virtual worlds. They encourage us to ask: how do these crafted personas and our own behavior intersect and reflexively inform each other in the 'real' world? What are the consequences of such a correlation between virtual physiognomy, everyday comportment and its role in influencing societal notions of beauty? Above all, how is each of us implicated in the way we craft our own personal avatars or personas through such tools of social mediation?

For further information and images, please contact the gallery at 212.229.2757.
Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11-6