

DAVID NOLAN **NEW YORK**

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PETER SAUL: *Recent Paintings*

October 19 – November 22, 2006

Opening Reception: Thursday, Oct. 19, 6 – 8 pm

As a young artist living in Europe during the 1950's, Peter Saul was doing what many American painters of his generation were doing: pondering what could follow the enormous legacy left by the School of Paris. Around the time that he met the art dealer Allan Frumkin in Paris in the late 1950's through an introduction by Matta, Saul was bypassing the vogue for AbEx and Pop and leapt into the arms of popular culture, whose pervasive visual force in post-war era Western Europe and America was one to be reckoned with. By mining comic books, cartoons, and media images, Saul created a unique style that would be present throughout his long career as a painter. No form of cultural expression is deemed too "high" or "low" in Saul's universe. Over the years, Saul has embraced every kind of figurative and narrative painting—still-life, portraiture, epic war and history, to name a few—injecting these tried and true genres with his own offbeat sensibility, earning him a reputation for being a rebel and provocateur. In the 1960's and 70's, his paintings and drawings of the Vietnam War, the Black Panthers, urban crime, and suburban ennui, brought him fame as a political artist à la Beckmann and Grosz, both of whom were equally unafraid of depicting horror and the grotesque in order to get their messages across. In his own words: "Politics, Propaganda and Pornography are 3 other things my pictures need if I'm going to have any hope of connecting with a vibrant, healthy art world that craves thrills and chills." Saul delivers on those "thrills and chills" in abundance with a group of five new paintings and two new works on paper created within the past year.

Hitler's Bunker presents an imagined scene where Hitler commits suicide by shooting himself in the mouth in the company of Stalin and General Eisenhower, whose larger than life fist packs a strong punch to the Fuhrer's head. *Still Life in the Bedroom* depicts a figure lying in bed, but it's far from a conventional portrait—the sprawling oddity has a head of a fish smoking a cigarette, a toothbrush for a leg, and lies carelessly among a bed full of rubble, including a teetering plate of roast turkey and a fork-spewing haloed toilet. Ancient mythology comes into the mix with *The Neptunes*, a portrayal of the Greek god of the sea

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with his family that combines the whimsy of Disney with the TV drama of the *Sopranos*. The bored and alienated corporate drone has been a favorite subject of Saul's as evident in *Around Here You Need a Sense of Humor*, in which a double-chinned, middle-aged man cringes as flying knives puncture his balding head. Finally, news about the rapid ascension of China in the world economy makes an appearance in *Chinese Businessman Lands on Wall Street*, whose title sounds like a newspaper headline (but was really made up by the artist). Suited businessmen in an office cower underneath a desk as a monstrous figure crashes through the ceiling, while the warning "Time Is Up Yankee Dogs" is written in mock Chinese lettering on the side.

Peter Saul was born in 1934 in San Francisco, California. His work has been exhibited widely in the United States and in Europe, and appears in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Centre Pompidou, Paris, the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, among many others. He currently lives in upstate New York.

A selection of new works will also be on view at Leo Koenig Inc. at 545 West 23rd Street, from October 19 through November 18.

A full-color catalogue with a forward by Peter Saul and an essay by Brooks Adams will be available. Please contact the gallery for more details.