

# SKARSTEDT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*ERIC FISCHL: LATE AMERICA*

OPENING RECEPTION: MAY 2, 6-8PM

550 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street, New York



Skarstedt is pleased to announce *Late America*, an exhibition of new paintings by Eric Fischl, will open at the Chelsea gallery on May 2, 2017, and remain on public view until June 24. In these major works, Fischl continues his exploration of moral ambivalence and social malaise against a suburban backdrop. Here, the backyard swimming pool serves as a stage set for a variety of personal dramas that can scale up to reflect a society in crisis.

The titular painting echoes our precarious times. A young boy draped in the American flag examines a crumpled male, while two immigrant day laborers passively mine the landscape in the foreground. This is a striking depiction of a fractured nation divided not only by class, ethnicity, or political affiliation, but by the hope, potential, and desire for connection embodied by the small child, and the depressed paralysis of the older man, presumably his father. Painted in the immediate aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, *Late America* is response to a moment marked by bewilderment and incomprehension.

That said, it would be insufficient to read the work, or the exhibition, as a political statement. Politics is simply another outcropping of cultural terrain that Fischl has mined for nearly four decades. In his ambitious canvases, long considered a hallmark of contemporary figurative painting, he creates a tense world of both comfort and portentous ambiguity. In low-lit suburban bedrooms, on speedboats and beach towels, in art fairs, the figures act out cryptic psychological and social dramas akin to the stories of John Cheever and John Updike, or the films of Mike Nichols and Robert Altman.



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All of the paintings in *Late America* take place around a pool—a generic, all-American habitat just as common to Long Island, where Fischl grew up, as to the rest of the country. His characters are set apart from their wholesome surroundings either by dress (nudity, rumpled evening wear), drink, or louche demeanor. In *Feeding the Turtle* (2016), a woman stands poised to dump a beer over the head of a child, who is bending over to feed the reptile. Her act is a foreboding non sequitur—exacerbated by the fact she has the high coloring of a heroine of Sargent or Cassatt—propelling the painting towards a terminus of Oedipal grief instead of a portrait of elegant insouciance we associate with the impressionistic style. Like most of Fischl's work, the driving tension lies in the ambiguity of the mise en scène, of the relation between the figures, as well as their actions and intent.

In *Daddy's Gone, Girl* (2016), Fischl revisits the young girl from his 1984 canvas *Daddy's Girl*. In the earlier work, the child is wrapped in her father's arms as both recline in a deck chair outside a Mediterranean villa. Here, over three decades later, Fischl revisits the young girl, now a young woman, now alone, wearing disheveled, funereal garb, gazing forlornly into middle distance. This is the first time Fischl returns to a character from an earlier work. In doing so, he amplifies a feeling central to all his paintings: the cause and effect of the depicted tumult is always off canvas. We are privy only to a poignant portrait of her distress.

## About Eric Fischl

Eric Fischl was born in New York in 1948. He graduated from the California Institute of Arts in Valencia, in 1972, and was a teacher between 1974 and 1978 at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax. Fischl had his first solo show, curated by Bruce W. Ferguson, at Dalhousie Art Gallery in Nova Scotia in 1975 before relocating to New York City in 1978.

Fischl has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and Europe. Recent solo exhibitions of his work have been held in institutions such as the Kestnergesellschaft in Hannover in 2007-2008, the Stadtkirche Darmstadt in Germany in 2006 and the Delaware Center of Contemporary Art in 2006. He has also participated in exhibitions in major institutions such as the The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Musee Beaubourg in Paris and the The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Fischl's work has been featured in over one thousand publications.

The artist is also the founder, President and lead curator for America: Now and Here. This multi-disciplinary exhibition of 150 of some of America's most celebrated visual artists, musicians, poets, playwrights, and filmmakers is designed to spark a national conversation about American identity through the arts. The project launched on May 5th, 2011 in Kansas City and travelled to Detroit and Chicago. The cross-country journey then continued in a roving museum and performance space contained within six 18-wheeler trucks that travelled to communities from coast to coast.

Eric Fischl is a Fellow at both the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Science. He lives and works in Sag Harbor, NY with his wife, the painter April Gornik.

## About Skarstedt



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Skarstedt (20 E. 79<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY) was founded in 1994 by Per Skarstedt to mount historical exhibitions by Contemporary European and American artists that had become the core of his specialty in Sweden and New York in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The New York gallery's program focuses on artists of the late Twentieth Century whose work explores concepts such as representation, authorship, identity, and sexual politics across a wide-range of media. Skarstedt's unique relationship with artists allows it to present exhibitions both on the primary and secondary markets, creating a dialogue between the generations.

Located at 8 Bennet Street, Skarstedt's new London gallery is situated in the historic district of St James's, on the corner of Arlington Street and Bennet Street, both named after Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington. Known as 'ministerial street' in the 17th and 18th centuries, the street was previously home to Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole and his son Horace Walpole, an esteemed collector and connoisseur. Measuring 5,000 square feet, with the main exhibition space at ground floor level, the three interconnected galleries enable Skarstedt to continue its program, of historically-researched and museum-quality exhibitions.

Skarstedt opened its Chelsea space at 550 W. 21<sup>st</sup> Street in May 2014 with the inaugural exhibition *Klein and Warhol: Fire and Oxidation Paintings*, adding to the gallery's existing locations on New York's Upper East Side and in London. The additional gallery space enables Skarstedt to expand on its core program of museum-quality, historically researched exhibitions from modern and contemporary masters.

The gallery works with the following artists and artists' estates: Francis Bacon, Georg Baselitz, Jean-Michel Basquiat, George Condo, Willem de Kooning, Eric Fischl, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Lucio Fontana, Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, Mike Kelley, Martin Kippenberger, Yves Klein, Jeff Koons, Barbara Kruger, Juan Muñoz, Cady Noland, Albert Oehlen, Richard Prince, David Salle, Thomas Schütte, Cindy Sherman, Rosemarie Trockel, Cy Twombly, Andy Warhol and Christopher Wool.

**Media Contact:** Adam Abdalla, Cultural Counsel, [adam@culturalcounsel.com](mailto:adam@culturalcounsel.com), (212) 379-9423

**Image Credit:** Eric Fischl, *Late America*, 2016 © Eric Fischl. Courtesy of the artist and Skarstedt, New York.

