

**For Immediate Release:  
'Summer Exhibition'  
July – August 2014**

Skarstedt is pleased to present the gallery's first summer group show in its new Chelsea location. On view are 5 iconic paintings by George Condo, Martin Kippenberger, Richard Prince, David Salle and Albert Oehlen, representing each artist's unique relationship with narrative and figurative painting ranging from 1985 through 2011. Though revealing vastly different messages and storylines, each artist has chosen to weave a unique narrative into their painting. Some messages are obscure, others explicit, while some verge on the mythical. The artworks converge on the grand scale to create an exhibition that is both expansive and anecdotal.

Condo's *Old Man Portrait* from 2011 trumps the viewer as the subject's piercing eyes gaze off into the distance. With an anti-heroic title, Condo has provided us with a mesmerizing portrait of a larger-than-life figure. Condo's signature bulbous cheekbones, chiclet white teeth, and cartoonish ears and nose set the tone for this wry, though solemn portrait. The subject's wispy white hair, creating a halo affect, accentuates the artist's skill in casting his subjects with an aire of mysticism, though their physical characteristics resemble that of the grotesque underworld. Condo's continual engagement with portraiture subverts its art historical roots and resonates with the viewers with its very own pictorial language.

In *Fooling with your Hair*, Salle creates a pastiche of mixed cultural references. Painted in 1985, this sprawling canvas juxtaposes various images along two planes, cutting the canvas distinctly in half. A nude woman in tense sexualized positions pervades the bottom half of the canvas, while reproductions of mod 1950's lamps and Giacometti bronzes reside on the top. Throughout his career, Salle has reflected on the modern preoccupation with reconciling one's individuality with the constant flood of images and ideas from our media-saturated world. *Fooling with your Hair* showcases the artist's desire to experiment with provocative imagery, stripping it of its sexuality by overlapping it with random images; in this case, fine and decorative art-historical references.

Just as Salle's vast canvas confounds the audience with scale and depth, so too does Richard Prince - with *I'm Lucky* from 2001-2002. Here Prince continues his commitment to the Monochrome Joke Paintings he began in 1986 but distinguishes them in a series he titled *Black and White and Color Paintings*. A layered and richly painted canvas of pastel hues serve as the backdrop for the artist's famed satirical and appropriated one-liners. In *I'm Lucky*, the stenciled letters overlaps each other, almost as if the joke has been set on repeat along a never-ending stretch of canvas. Abstract brushwork and text converge in a playful yet sinister way - a well-known trademark of Prince's dedication to commenting on our American contemporary culture. Nancy Spector commented on Prince's jokes in noting that "like an advertisement, a recycled joke is essentially authorless, already out there in the world, available, just waiting to be repeated. It is the power of the joke to represent the darker side of existence via comic relief that must have also appealed to Prince since humor- in its more sardonic forms- has played a central role in his art since the mid 1980s" (N. Spector, 'Nowhere Man' in *Richard Prince: Spiritual America*, New York, 2007)

Kippenberger's abbreviated, yet robust oeuvre is defined by art that transfixes the audience with its obtuse yet highly critical messages. He was a master of an aggressive and physical use of painting with epic proportions, which both embraced and destroyed narratives. Kippenberger continually probed the contemporary and cultural German landscape and in this series, titled *Krieg/Böse*, which translates to *War/Wicked*, he references how liberal Germans in the post-war decades dealt with the guilt of their recent history. Kippenberger has chosen to depict such commentary on a large scale, guiding the viewer to methodically move from one quadrant of the canvas to another following the numbers in each corner. The peculiar green canary offsets the composition, and by turning the bird upside down on its head, Kippenberger disarms the implied violence of the ship's artillery. This dichotomy plays with oppositions such as the destruction of man in the face of nature's creations, and the danger of warfare against humankind.

Physical and gestural brushwork prevail in Oehlen's, *Grazie* from 1982. A sublime example of the neo-expressionist style, Oehlen's regal yet dismembered figure inhabits a violent and fractured surface. Over the course of his career, Oehlen has pushed the limits of paint as a medium and tests the notion of a balanced composition, driving his work towards what has been coined "ugly painting". Oehlen comments on his process in saying that "first you take a step towards ugliness and then, somehow or other, you wind up where its beautiful" (A. Oehlen, quoted in *Monopol: Magazin für Kunst und Leben*, Vol. 1, 2010). The muddy and somber tonalities in this powerful work offset the figure's stateliness, and by choosing an eloquent title such as *Grazie*, Oehlen succeeds in charting an experimental direction for this traditional medium.

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