

PRESS RELEASE

PAUL McCARTHY

7 June – 25 July 2009, Hauser & Wirth Zürich

Opening: Saturday 6 June 2009, 5 – 8 pm

Captain Ballsack, Bush, pigs, piracy, Hummels and a plethora of materials all feature in Paul McCarthy's extraordinary new sculptures and drawings, on display in the downstairs galleries of Hauser & Wirth Zürich. The works extend McCarthy's fictive universe, advancing a raucous, exuberant mayhem that further admits the depravities of society into the realm of art making.

Captain Ballsack (Original) (2001-2009) is a splendidly heterogeneous three metre high sculpture that combines clay, carpet, foam and fibreglass with found objects. His giant cleft chin is in fact an enormous rancid-looking scrotum adorned with a red crown formed out of an upturned armchair. Perched bashfully on a pair of knock-kneed legs, he stands on a red-carpeted platform that is foully bespattered with what looks to be semen; a kind of gross-out cartoon character and aficionado of the Readymade. The pirate has for a long time been a fecund figure in McCarthy's work, spawning numerous sculptures such as *Jack* (2002), *Shit Face* (2002) and *Captain Dick Hat* (2003), and providing the psychological theme for a male-dominated, hermetically closed world in which fantasies come to the surface and moral barriers are torn down.

George Bush figures alongside pigs in several new sculptures. *Mountain* (2009), assembled entirely in the gallery, is a foam confederacy of Bush heads and pig bodies resting upon auction catalogues and dripping with gunk, providing an indictment of the greed and idiocy that conditioned the economic crisis. In *Puppet (Original)* (2005-2008) bush and cohorts have undergone a Circe-esque transformation, their heads grafted onto the bodies of pigs, their self-composure further assailed by metallic tubes which shaft their heads and from which dangle operating ropes. The silicon *Static (Pink)* (2004-2009) features the hapless former President engaged in porcine sex, meanwhile *Paula Jones (Original)* (2005-2008) similarly implicates Clinton. These works have all grown out of *Pig Island*, a vast, sprawling, ongoing installation that McCarthy has been developing in his studio over the past 6 years. Reminiscent of the anarchic assemblages of Dieter Roth through its teeming conjunction of artwork and studio ingredients, *Pig Island* is the orgiastic breeding ground for unnatural hybrids.

Typically the political themes of overseas adventurism and sexual gluttony are embodied through McCarthy's longstanding, larger-than-life iconography. Persona with mutilated limbs and caricature heads (often gouged or shafted by phallic objects), fluids and Disney-esque locations feature incessantly in his works: from his performances of the '70s to the installations that he has made in recent years with his son Damon (especially *Caribbean Pirates* (2001-2005) and *Piccadilly Circus* (2003)), becoming ever more complex, potent and inter-connected.

The 'Hummels', shown here as a group for the first time, are a new subject for McCarthy. These are kitsch German-made, porcelain figurines of children that in McCarthy's hands become astonishingly grotesque and obscene, commodifications of innocence ripe for defilement. Their flesh is a queasy amalgam of clay, fibreglass, foam and resin that has dripped off them and lies disgustingly curdled at their feet, as though their bodies are decomposing in front of the viewer. Sculptures such as *Kissing Cousins* (2009), *Happy Traveler* (2008) and *Mountaineer (Original)* (2009) all travesty a central-European personification of purity, relating back to McCarthy's earlier twisted parodies of Heidi and other clichéd Swiss characters. They are accompanied by large-scale *Mountaineer Hummel* drawings that submit inkjet prints of mountaineers to lewd embellishments in oil stick. The artist augments contemporary culture, taking what is already there and further exaggerating existing perversities.

Paul McCarthy was born in Salt Lake City in 1945 and lives and works in California. Recent major exhibitions of his work include 'Central Symmetrical Rotation' Movement - Three Installations, Two Films', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2008); 'Paul McCarthy - Head Shop/Shop Head', Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2006), which toured to ARoS Aarhus Museum of Art, Aarhus, and S.M.A.K., Gent (both 2007); and 'Paul McCarthy: LaLa land parodie paradises', Haus der Kunst, Munich, which toured to Whitechapel Gallery, London (both 2005).

Joan Mitchell. Sunflowers can be seen concurrently in Hauser & Wirth Zürich's upstairs gallery.

GALLERY HOURS Tuesday to Friday 12 – 6 pm, Saturday 11 am – 5 pm

OPENING HOURS DURING ART BASEL:

Sunday 7 June, 11 am – 8 pm

Monday – Friday, 10 am – 6 pm

Saturday and Sunday, 11 am – 5 pm

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS ZÜRICH:

PIPILOTTI RIST, 29 August – 17 October 2009

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS LONDON:

MARTIN EDER

Hauser & Wirth London, 15 Old Bond Street, 10 – 26 September 2009

SUBODH GUPTA

Hauser & Wirth London, 196a Piccadilly and 15 Old Bond Street, 1 – 31 October 2009

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