

PRESS RELEASE

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PAUL McCARTHY TO UNVEIL 'WHITE SNOW'

HAUSER & WIRTH NEW YORK

NOVEMBER 5 – DECEMBER 24 2009

OPENING: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 6 – 8PM

New York, NY... Beginning November 5, 2009, Hauser & Wirth New York will present *WHITE SNOW*, a group of never before seen pieces from a new body of work by Paul McCarthy, drawing upon the famous 19th century German folk tale 'Snow White' ('Schneewitte') and commenting upon the modern interpretation of the story in Disney's beloved 1937 animated classic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

WHITE SNOW at Hauser & Wirth New York will be comprised of two sets of drawings made by the artist since late 2008. The first is a selection of diminutive black and white pencil works as detailed, atmospheric and unapologetically lovely as Old Master drawings. Here, McCarthy develops his characters – the young Snow White masturbating in a solitary romantic reverie, various phallic-nosed dwarfs in a dither at the arrival of the beautiful stranger in their midst – as players in a sly yet poignant coming-of-age narrative packing a metaphorical wallop. The images touch upon myriad dark associations invited by the *Snow White* tale while simultaneously suggesting a love story with profound personal resonance for the artist.



By turns heartbreaking and wickedly witty, these intimate works provide the foil for a second set of images – more than a dozen massive drawings, ranging in height from 7 to 10 feet and incorporating pages torn from auction catalogues, illustrated books, tabloids and pornographic magazines. McCarthy created these enormous, fiercely gestural and unstintingly funny drawings through a performative process – walking around and into his picture plane, coming from different directions toward paper stretched out on specially constructed tables while intermittently speaking aloud “in a sort of trance”, in a recorded monologue of words and sounds.

One of the few exhibitions ever to focus exclusively upon Paul McCarthy's drawings, *WHITE SNOW* provides rare access to the initial stages of exploration that fuel the work of one of America's most challenging and influential artists. McCarthy's early investigations into his characters always occur through repeated and even compulsive sketching, a process that reveals



layers of connections – in this case, connections between Snow White and icons of femininity as diverse as Venus, the Mona Lisa, the classical high art nude and an array of expertly packaged celebrities who populate our movies and tabloids, as well as people from the artist's own life and private fantasies – and will ultimately give rise to sculptures, installations, a film and other works over time.

With their antecedents in his now famous 1992 *Heidi* collaboration with the artist Mike Kelley, the new WHITE SNOW drawings shift the *Heidi* narrative back to the New World where McCarthy has been inspired by impressions of the deep forests and magical clearings on his own property above the Mojave Desert and books about Disney's version of Snow White given to him by friends. Weaving his ideas about these and other influences together, he has embarked upon an investigation of the culture that generates and embraces mass-produced images – and of artmaking itself. "It's more about making than telling," McCarthy has said. "Drawing is a form of analysis. I'm not

controlling it, just allowing it to unfold. It's not about clarity, it's about each piece suggesting the next one in a continuum."

The WHITE SNOW exhibition simultaneously introduces McCarthy's ambitious long-term plans for his theme and vividly reveals the deep complexities of his varied agenda. The drawings on view at Hauser & Wirth New York extend his hallmark critique of our most stubbornly held and hypocritical societal norms. But while McCarthy continues here to polish his funhouse mirror onto the contradictions of Hollywood-generated fantasies and cherished American notions of purity and decency, he also opens – perhaps more widely than ever before – a window onto the deeper regions of his artistic discipline and his psyche. The large WHITE SNOW drawings, with their bold, sweeping lines and structural rigor, are simultaneous celebrations and critiques of monumental painting and its aggressively male heroes; he duels overtly with such titans of Modernism as de Kooning, Rauschenberg and Twombly, appropriating their visual language while subverting it. At the same time, McCarthy's drawings contain worlds of self-reflection, with memory as the artist's constant co-author.

"WHITE SNOW is a history, and some of that history is a self-portrait," he has said. "The longer you live in the world the more you transpose present and past.



At times, the past becomes the window you travel through, the window between the present and past, and things become more layered. You aren't in the past but you are thinking about it. This [work] is not just about the story of Snow White, it's a story about a lot of things. It's about art, it's a love story. I don't have a concrete answer about what it is and I'm not looking for one. I don't look for art to provide answers. I do something and it takes me to the next thing and the next after that."

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1945 in Salt Lake City, Utah, Paul McCarthy is admired internationally as one of the most important and influential of American artists. He is known for challenging, visceral work in a variety of mediums – from performance, photography, video and installation, to sculpture, drawing and painting – and scales ranging from monumental to tiny. Playing on popular illusions, delusions and cultural myths, McCarthy's work has often incorporated obsessive activities and challenged expected physical orientation. Absent or present, the human figure has been a constant element in his work, whether through the artist's own performances or the army of characters he has created to deliberately confuse codes, mix high and low culture, and provoke an analysis of our fundamental beliefs.

McCarthy studied art at the University of Utah and the San Francisco Art Institute, receiving a BFA in painting. In 1972 he studied film, video and art at the University of Southern California receiving an MFA. From 1982 to 2002, he taught performance, video, installation and performance art history at the University of California, Los Angeles. McCarthy has had numerous acclaimed solo exhibitions at museums and galleries internationally, including a major exhibition of his Inflatables





at the De Uithof in Utrecht entitled 'Paul McCarthy – Air Pressure'; 'Paul McCarthy – Head Shop / Shop Head' at Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2008); Tate Modern, London (2003); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2000); and the New Museum, New York (2000).

Paul McCarthy currently lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

ABOUT HAUSER & WIRTH

Hauser & Wirth is a global enterprise, founded in Zürich in 1992 by Iwan and Manuela Wirth and Ursula Hauser. Since 1996 the gallery has been located in the former Löwenbrau brewery building, along with other contemporary art galleries, the Kunsthalle Zürich, and the Migros Museum. In 2003, Hauser & Wirth opened Hauser & Wirth London on Piccadilly in an historic building designed by Sir Edwin

Lutyens, adding a new and energetic dimension to London's growing importance as an international art center. In 2006, Hauser & Wirth at Colnaghi was created on London's Old Bond Street. Hauser & Wirth New York opened to the public on the Upper East Side of Manhattan in September 2009.

Hauser & Wirth New York is open to visitors Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am until 6 pm. The general public can find additional information about the gallery, its exhibitions and programs online at: www.hauserwirth.com

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In order of appearance in press release:

[White Snow] Dwarf Heads
2009
Pencil on vellum, tape
50.2 x 45.1 cm / 19 3/4 x 17 3/4 in

Farrah Fawcett [White Snow]
2009
Charcoal, oil stick, collage on paper
246.4 x 203.2 cm / 97 x 80 in

White Snow, Ginger Then
2009
Charcoal, oil stick, collage on paper
261.6 x 203.2 cm / 103 x 80 in

[White Snow] Dwarf Heads
2009
Pencil on vellum
43.2 x 35.6 cm / 17 x 14 in

[White Snow] Dwarf Heads
2009
Pencil on vellum
43.2 x 35.6 cm / 17 x 14 in

[Shit Pie (White Snow)]
2009
Charcoal, oil stick, collage on paper
261.6 x 307.3 cm / 103 x 121 in

White Snow [group 2]
2008
Pencil on vellum
38.7 x 35.6 cm / 15 1/4 x 14 in