

# BEN BROWN FINE ARTS

*Press Release for Immediate Release*

## MARTIN MULL: THE EIGHT SEASONS

20 April – June 4, 2010

Private View 19 April, 2010 6 – 8 pm

*I had a teacher in art school who said something about the only works he really enjoyed seeing  
or found much in were works where he had a sense that a discovery was made in the course of making this object.  
I like to hold to that as my marching orders.*

- Martin Mull

Ben Brown Fine Arts is pleased to present our second solo exhibition of works by American painter Martin Mull running from April 20 until June 4 at 12 Brook's Mews, London. Drawing equally from lifestyle magazines and life experience, Martin Mull cleverly appropriates visual material from both, imbuing his paintings with a sense of nostalgia for the lost 'golden years' of 1950s America.

The saying goes 'stick to what you know best', and Martin Mull certainly has stuck to satire. From his early days of stand-up comedy, to a long sojourn in the land of American television sitcoms, Mull since 1980, has returned to painting full time and with a vengeance. In *The Eight Seasons*, Martin Mull takes a voyeuristic peak over the white picket fence, and penetrates through niceties of post-war suburban culture. Mull's reinterpretation of the theme of the four seasons is a concrete extension of his previous endeavors and his self-consciously synthetic, compact cinematic snap shots play out a warped sitcom featuring black and white nudes residing within the colourful backdrop of suburban Los Angeles. As the viewer struggles to discern one season from the other, it quickly becomes apparent the immediate lack of any distinguishable season thereof.

Growing up in the period he affectionately mocks, Mull builds up a sense of tension in his paintings by juxtaposing contradictory elements or placing figures in unlikely contexts. Bucolic and candid imagery highlight the existing sub-text of Cold War tensions behind resolute pictures of the cozy suburban ideal. Beneath the veneer of pastel paint and comforting smiles lies a muscular governmental propaganda machine set on concocting the antidote of an unsettled public. His painterly technique is further accentuated by his use of a monochromatic palette and a broader application of pigment for shadowing harping back to a time and place before colour photography.

Mull's depictions of contented and secure looking middle-class suburban Americans are subverted with clever twists and ironical juxtapositions that make them still seem relevant to the nation's current socio-economic climate. If there is a narrative in Mull's work it is hinted at rather than depicted literally and it is left to the viewers and their disparate points of view to determine their own interpretation. It is more of a psychological story that is moody, haunting and sometimes disturbing as he delves with insight into the underlying flaws of the American dream.

Martin Mull lives and works in Los Angeles. Born in 1943, in Chicago, Illinois, Mull was raised in Ohio and later received his BFA in 1965 followed by an MFA in 1967 from the Rhode Island School of Design. Having exhibited extensively over the past thirty years, Mull's work is in the permanent collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, The Whitney Museum of Art, New York and the Total Contemporary Art Museum, Seoul amongst others.

The artist will be in attendance at the Private View and is available for interviews.

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