

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS

Press Release for Immediate Release

MARTIN MULL: LEAP OF FAITH

5 December 2012 – 25 January 2013

Private View 4 December 2012 6 – 8 pm

*I've always had a certain fascination.
It's basically paint what you know, and this is what I grew up with.
- Martin Mull*

Ben Brown Fine Arts is pleased to present our third solo exhibition of works by American painter Martin Mull, whose new works acquaint his London audience with the discordant promises of post-World War II suburban America he grew up with. Drawing equally from lifestyle magazines and life experience, Martin Mull cleverly appropriates visual material from both; his paintings function against the framework of flickering collective memory and within the cultural unrest and individual discontent of the present.

Throughout his multi-faceted career in stand-up comedy, music, film and television, Mull has become well known as an ironist and satirist, however, the comedic quality of his paintings is contradicted by an equal amount of sorrow – he has moved beyond irony and satire to successfully achieve depth and meaning.

Mull's careful compositions are a continuation of the lineage of American *sinister, brooding, mystifying* narrative painting of Edward Hopper, Erick Fischl, Mark Tansey and John Currin. Mull's narratives are complicated and multi-layered – he successfully builds up a sense of tension in his paintings by juxtaposing contradictory elements or placing figures in unlikely contexts. 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.

Leap of Faith, 2011, which lends the exhibition its name, encapsulates the dramatic and discordant elements that distinguish Mull's paintings. Framed within a border of vintage chintz, three young men are seen happily suspended in midair, appearing to jump into an awaiting body of water. Unbeknownst to the would-be swimmers, behind them a train steams ahead at full speed, leaving the viewer to disentangle the theatrical, dream-like scene in front of them. Mull's deftly painted figures and locomotive in a monochromatic palette give the impression of compact cinematic snapshots, or an old photograph; this combined with the unexpected bursts of colour of the leaves in the foreground suggest the imperfect clarity of hindsight. An essential component of live theatre, film and television, this suspension of disbelief that Mull asks from his viewers is the ultimate leap of faith.

About Martin Mull

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. A catalogue is available.

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