

CHEIM & READ

PRESS RELEASE

McDERMOTT & McGOUGH *ATRUE STORY BASED ON LIES*

January 12 – February 11, 2006

Opening Reception: Thursday, January 12
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Cheim & Read is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by McDermott & McGough. A full-color catalogue accompanies the exhibition, with an essay by Robert Rosenblum.

David McDermott (born 1952) and Peter McGough (born 1958) met in the notorious East Village art scene of the 1980s, and have since been renowned for their seemingly seamless fusion of art and life. In a revolt against the confines of chronological time, McDermott & McGough appropriated imagery and objects from the late 1800s and early 1900s, reconstructing their lives as Victorian dandies (top hats, tails and all) and immersing themselves in the environment and era in which they felt best suited. Paintings, installations and photographs are fueled by this self-imposed time travel, and are reflective of the larger performance art of their everyday lives. David McDermott, in recalling their experience of the 1980s to Bob Nickas, noted: “We put [our money] into our time experiment. That was our art as much as our paintings were” (Artforum, March 2003). Though their work relies on the nostalgia inherent to its imagery (and, as Robert Rosenblum points out in his essay for the exhibition, contemporary culture’s insatiable “thirst for nostalgia”), McDermott & McGough subvert the obvious by incorporating homoerotic and art historical references, allowing the subject to expand outside of its time-capsule-like boundaries and to re-exist in relation to current cultural and artistic ideals.

In this current exhibition, McDermott & McGough visit 1950s and early 1960s American suburbia and the pop culture imagery found in post-war advertisements, home interiors and comic books of the time. The paintings also incorporate a provocative “behind the scenes” script of pop typography, revealing undercurrents of sex and violence beneath gentrified exteriors. As Rosenblum notes in his accompanying essay: “McDermott & McGough excavate what Freud might have called the id of mid-century suburban America.” Though the work borrows from 1950s archetypes, the imagery exposes previously hidden protagonists. A male couple embraces in the midst

of teenage superheroes; a transvestite checks her lipstick. Boys with beer cans lounge seductively; other boys contemplate the weight of a basketball with renewed intensity. The paintings reveal the underlying tension not only of the average teenage boy's culturally squelched fantasies, but that of a *gay* teenage boy's fantasies. The anticipated repression associated with 1950s propriety is upended by a subtext of homoeroticism.

In addition to this revealed sexuality, McDermott & McGough reference art historical precedents in their choice of imagery. Rosenblum recognizes their paintings in the "context of the ongoing revivals of Pop Art." He cites Lichtenstein's famed use of the comic strip and Warhol's opposing themes of carefree capitalism and violent culture (brillo boxes versus race riots) as the work's obvious precursors, and goes on to mention Richard Hamilton's legendary, *What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?*, 1956. This art historical precedent is perhaps most linked to McDermott & McGough's paintings; the collaged characters and objects, out-of-place and sexualized, were shocking additions to a contemporary 1950s domestic landscape. But, as Rosenblum points out, Hamilton's collage relied on the freshness of its shock, and its unprecedented comment on life, real-time. McDermott & McGough, in their revisionist reconstruction of Pop imagery, instead question the passage of time, and reposition the shock effect to impact an altogether different era.

For additional information please contact us by calling 212/242-7727, faxing 212/242-7737, or emailing galler@heimread.com.