

HALL

ART FOUNDATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Peter Saul

9 May through 29 November 2015
Hall Art Foundation | Reading, Vermont

New York, NY: (15 April 2015) – The Hall Art Foundation is pleased to announce an exhibition by American artist Peter Saul to be held in its galleries in Reading, Vermont from 9 May – 29 November 2015. Known for creating work that is transgressive and challenging, while also being irreverent and outlandishly humorous, this exhibition brings together approximately forty paintings and works on paper that span the artist’s career from 1959 to 2012.

Saul is best known for paintings that incorporate easily recognizable, often lowbrow imagery from popular culture in an exaggerated and provocative way. Regularly tackling taboo, politically incorrect subject matter, his work employs classic painting genre formats in order to critique political and social events. His twisted, comic-book imagery, blazing color, and distortions of form and scale have developed into a distinct and signature style that combines Pop, Surrealism, Expressionism and an underground cartoon aesthetic.

Saul spent his postgraduate years in the late 1950's and early 1960's traveling abroad through Holland, Paris and Rome. From this European eye-view, he began to incorporate in his work symbols of American mass culture and consumption. It was during this time that he created the now-renowned group of *Icebox* paintings. *Ice Box 8* (1963) depicts a refrigerator packed with various food items and canned goods, a “pimpley boy in the shape of a red coke bottle, wearing polka dot underwear, running in front of an icebox,¹” and a surrealistically positioned bathtub floating overhead. A red line zips across the surface illustrating the path between the boy and the refrigerator. In *Mad Docter* (1964) Saul pulls together various everyday objects, signs and figures into a compact composition that presents a surreal, amusing, but also unsettling narrative. Saul’s method of representing elements of consumer culture in a gestural and painterly manner was completely novel at the time.

In 1964, Saul returned to the United States, settling in Mill Valley, California. He resolved to deal head-on with American politics and culture, specifically with the war in Vietnam. Saul’s *Vietnam* paintings, such as *Yankee Garbage* (1966), depict scenes of combat and acts of torture between American G.I.’s and Vietnamese women. In these works, Saul abandons the painterly nature of his earlier canvases in favor of a hard-edged figurative style, acidic colors and an all-over, chaotic composition where forms flow fluidly into each other. The brilliant colors and cartoon-like imagery clashes with the exceptionally violent acts being depicted.

In the early 1970’s, after moving from California to Chappaqua, New York, Saul turns his focus to a series of large-scale historical epics in which he reinterprets American Scene paintings, in addition to famous art historical masterworks. *Custer’s Last Stand II* (1974) is a bright and bubbly, yet extremely violent portrayal of the famous 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn, during which General Custer and his 7th Cavalry Regiment suffered a severe defeat by the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes. Saul’s *The Death of Sardanapolis* (1990) is a reinterpretation of Eugène Delacroix’s famous masterwork, *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1827). Already excited by the drama, realism and monumentality of French 19th century painting, Saul’s adjustments and use of fluorescent color accentuate the violence and power of the scene.

¹ Peter Saul in *Red Grooms/Peter Saul: The Early Sixties*. (New York: Allan Frumkin Gallery, 1983).

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Since the mid-1970's, Saul has painted satirical portraits that feature art world personalities, politicians, and notorious celebrities. Despite a politically incorrect approach, and a frequent underlying message that is ruthlessly critical, his portraits of leading politicians like Newt Gingrich, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush retain a strong element of humor. In *Dali Advises the President* (2004), the famous Spanish surrealist painter Salvador Dali is shown standing on the shoulder of George W. Bush, stroking the top of his head while pouring champagne into his ear and muttering "blah, blah, blah, blah..." Saul imparts in equal measure the wit and criticism found in his satirical portraits on himself. In self-portraits like *Peter Saul vs. Pop Art* (2012), the artist portrays himself nervously hacking through a can of Campbell's tomato soup, made iconic by Andy Warhol, with a chainsaw.

Born in San Francisco in 1934, Peter Saul studied at the California School of Fine Arts and received his BFA from the School of Fine Arts at Washington University in Saint Louis. Saul has shown widely throughout Europe and the United States. Important solo exhibitions include a retrospective at Northern Illinois University, De Kalb, which traveled to the Madison Art Center, Wisconsin (1980); a retrospective organized by the Aspen Art Museum, Colorado, which traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, the Laguna Gloria Art Museum, Austin, TX, and the Contemporary Art Center in New Orleans (1989); and a retrospective at the Musée de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix, Les Sables d'Olonne, France, which traveled to the Musée de l'Hôtel Bertrand, Châteauroux, France, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dole, France, and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Mons, Belgium. In 2008, a major and widely noted retrospective of his career was organized by the Orange County Museum of Art in Newport Beach, CA, the Contemporary Art Center in New Orleans, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art in Philadelphia. His works can be found in permanent museum collections around the world including the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; the Dallas Museum of Art, TX; and the Art Institute of Chicago, among many others. Peter Saul currently lives and works in New York.

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The Hall Art Foundation in Reading, Vermont is open weekends and Wednesdays by appointment.

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For more information and images, please contact the Foundation's administrative office at + 1 212 256 0057 or info@hallartfoundation.org. Please also find further documentation on our website www.hallartfoundation.org.

The exhibition runs concurrently with *Keith Sonnier: Early Neon*.

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Images for Press

Image



Details and Credit Line

Peter Saul
Ice Box 8, 1963
Oil on canvas
74 ¾ x 63 inches (190 x 160 cm)
Hall Collection
Courtesy Hall Art Foundation
© Peter Saul



Peter Saul
Mad Doctor, 1964
Oil on canvas
70 ¾ x 78 ¼ inches (179.5 x 199 cm)
Hall Collection
Courtesy Hall Art Foundation
© Peter Saul



Peter Saul
Yankee Garbage, 1966
Acrylic and felt tip pen on canvas
71 ¾ x 69 ¼ inches (182 x 176 cm)
Hall Collection
Courtesy Hall Art Foundation
© Peter Saul



Peter Saul
Custer's Last Stand II, 1974
Acrylic on canvas
89 ¼ x 123 inches (226.5 x 312.5 cm)
Hall Collection
Courtesy Hall Art Foundation
© Peter Saul

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Image



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Peter Saul
The Death of Sardanapolis, 1990
Acrylic and oil on canvas
78 x 96 inches (198 x 244 cm)
Hall Collection
Courtesy Hall Art Foundation
© Peter Saul



Peter Saul
Dali Advises the President, 2004
Acrylic on canvas
74 x 66 inches (188 x 167.5 cm)
Hall Collection
Courtesy Hall Art Foundation
© Peter Saul



Peter Saul
Peter Saul vs. Pop Art, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
75 x 72 inches (190.5 x 183 cm)
Hall Collection
Courtesy Hall Art Foundation
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