

PAUL P.  
*Blue Hydrangea*  
May 1 - June 19, 2004

Organized by Simon Watson / Scenic, Marc Selwyn Fine Art is pleased to present Paul P. in an exhibit of new paintings and drawings. This is the artist's first solo show in Los Angeles.

Paul P's exhibition "Blue Hydrangea" is inspired by 19th century painter James McNeill Whistler's contemporary friend, and flamboyant fin-de-siecle dandy, Count de Montesquiou. The new work consists of sixteen portrait paintings and drawings featuring young men (minor gay porn stars of the 1970s and 80s) set in a palette of dusky blues with a suggestion of the outdoors (some with hydrangea in the background) and four paintings and drawings featuring bats.

Exotic symbols of difference in a Beaux-Arts style, Paul P.'s delicate images of young men, flowers, and bats are imbued with desire and loss that blur the genres of pornography, portraiture and still life. Known for his pencil and watercolors on paper, P.'s work features touches of Whistler and Goya in their swirling and flowerscaped backgrounds.

In The Frick Collection's monograph "Whistler and Montesquiou" Edgar Mundall writes, "The blue hydrangea (*Hydrangea hortensia*), which derives its strange but perfectly natural coloring from sundry agents in the soil, was first a more banal discovery at some Parisian florist's, where it made its first appearance during the 1880's." De Montesquiou (a man who inspired numerous artists, among them Marcel Proust) loved the blue hydrangea with its "abnormal azure blue," and the bat, that "winged creature of dusk." And he embraced them as symbols of himself.

Implicit in the crescendo of a flower's bloom is the temporal nature of its existence. Like the peculiar hydrangea, Paul P. has plucked these boys at full bloom, disjoining them from their tragic context and transforming them into delicate, exotic creatures. This temporality throws a shadow on the future, yet resists becoming somber AIDS memorial as there is a genuine boyish joy in the work. P. indeed belongs to a generation untainted by tragedy and loss.

Seeing the work through the blue hydrangea, the subjects can become manifestations of the flower's ideal and opulence.

"I felt that this refractory plant associated with this rebellious bird would dominate my life, because the two together would make use of me, to extract, for the one, in its abnormal azure blue, and the other, in its colorless anxiety, the thousand and one, perhaps the thousand and three reasons why they have been designated, among all others, and for ever and ever, to represent the double sign of Dissimilarity and Melancholy."

- excerpt from Montesquiou "Les Pas effaces, memoirs," Paris 1923

A new depth and beauty has been reached as P. continues to explore the symbols of strange difference and opulence and contemporary gay aesthetic experience.

### **About the artist**

Paul P. received a BFA from York University, Toronto (2000) and has been featured in numerous group and solo exhibitions since 1999. Well-received in his native Toronto, he has been featured in solo exhibitions at Daniel Reich Gallery in New York (2003) and Angstrom Gallery in Dallas. His work has also been included in group shows at D'Amelio Terras, NYC (2004), and The Power Plant, Toronto (2004).

### **About the organizer**

Simon Watson is New York-based curator, producer and arts educator. Watson is a partner with Craig Hensala in Scenic, a New York-based national arts advisory and cultural events planning agency that creates art projects for diverse collectors and organizations. Clients of the past two years include: Amnesty International, The Armory Show, Bergdorf Goodman, Chanel, Coalition for the Homeless/ARTWALK NY, Giorgio Armani, The Susan & Michael Hort Collection, JPMorganChase, Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Planned Parenthood/Los Angeles, Roberts & Tilton Gallery, Russell Simmons, USA Networks/Trio, and Vogue. Watson is also the Director of Downtown Arts Projects (producer of the 2002 Downtown Arts Festival, NYC) and 1999 LA Edge Festival). With a 25-year commitment to discovering outstanding emerging artists, Watson has created first solo and break-through exhibitions for: Lutz Bacher, Nayland Blake, Peter Cain, Carroll Dunham, Nicole Eisenman, Tony Fehr, R.M. Fischer, Louise Fishman, Deborah Kass, Lyle Ashton Harris, Sherrie Levine, Paul P., Jack Pierson, Richard Prince, Martha Roseler, Gary Simmons and Kehinde Wiley.

### **About the gallery**

Marc Selwyn Fine Art represents mid-career and established artists including James Casebere, Tom Knechtel, Richard Misrach, Lee Mullican, Mel Bochner, and Robert Overby. Selwyn also prides himself on introducing young, cutting-edge artists to an international audience. The gallery recently inaugurated its new space with an exhibition of Robert Mapplethorpe photographs curated by Catherine Opie.