

PETER DOIG

MICHAEL WERNER GALLERY & GAVIN BROWN'S ENTERPRISE - NEW YORK



PETER DOIG, Ping Pong, 2006-08. Oil on canvas, 240 x 360 cm.
Courtesy Michael Werner Gallery, New York; Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York.

Peter Doig's technique has often been misunderstood, his characterization as a YBA is laughable, and the claim that his chroma has changed since moving to Trinidad is incorrect. Doig's paintings are often characterized as containing "foreboding" or "melancholy." Many writers state that Doig's work is about recollection, or worse that it's hallucinatory. If you take away the fact that Doig rarely makes work from live observation, then it's obvious that he's a 3rd or 4th generation postimpressionist. By his own admission: "I paint landscapes and some of them have figures in them, that's all you need to know really."

For his first solo show in NY in 6 years, Doig presents a two-venue show that fulfills the promise demonstrated by his work in the early '90s. Although the work for these two shows displays significant stylistic differences from the "lace" paintings at the beginning of Doig's career, everything else is still there: His stalking of a mood, his adherence to a muted palette, his availability to accident, his teetering between representation and abstraction, and his meaningless integration between figure and landscape as a device to pull the viewer in to the image. Doig's traditional working method hasn't changed either — he continues to draw from a personal archive of photographs, postcards, magazine clippings, etchings, and preliminary sketches (many traced).

The most compelling work at Michael Werner is *Man Dressed As Bat (Night)* 2008. Although there are several versions of this painting which have already been exhibited, here we see Doig creating a dense, psycho-logical experience that is funny and offers an insight into the artist's studio life. The "Bat" paintings were made after a friend gave Doig a papier-maché figure of a man dressed as a bat, a character that crops up regularly in Trinidadian carnival. Noticing the shadow that it cast against the wall in his studio one day, Doig decided to paint the shadow. In Gavin Brown's downtown gallery, *Untitled (Ping Pong)*, 2006-08, depicting a balding man playing ping pong in his shorts is not the best work. Appearing in 10 of the 24 works, the moustached man may or may not be a representation of the artist. The fact that in all but one of these images the man is playing against an invisible opponent, and that in the large-scale painting the figure is staged in a jungle, just in front of a blue brick grid, is a fantastic tease that presents a nice taught wire to hang conjecture on. The best painting in this gallery is *Music Of The Future* (2002-07). Not only does it represent the apotheosis of Doig's work to date, it also shows one of the most enduring aspects of the artist's work — that the paintings take a lot of time to make.

Adam Mendelsohn