

76 GRAND STREET NEW YORK NY 10013



**SONGS FOR SALE**  
**BIG AMERICAN PAINTINGS BY**  
**ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG**  
**DAVID SALLE**  
**MICHAEL BEVILACQUA**  
**SEPTEMBER 6 – OCTOBER 14, 2006**  
**18 WOOSTER STREET**

Songs for Sale, an exhibition of three large-scale paintings by Robert Rauschenberg, David Salle, and Michael Bevilacqua opens on September 6, 2006 at Deitch Projects.

The exhibition celebrates the tradition of the “big American painting,” the epic works of the New York School and Pop era painters that reflect the scale of the American landscape and the sweep of the American vision.

The exhibition features three ambitious works: Robert Rauschenberg’s *Ten Yard Sale*, 1999, 10 ½ x 29 feet, David Salle’s *Songs for Sale*, 1997, 10 x 85 feet, and Michael Bevilacqua’s *Show Your Bones*, 2006, 10 x 40 feet.

Robert Rauschenberg’s *Ten Yard Sale* is one of the largest works from the *Anagrams (A Pun)* series, the second phase of his *Anagrams*. Mary Lynn Klotz, author of *Rauschenberg/Art and Life*, describes the *Anagrams* as telling “his story of the world in the last few years of the twentieth century through imagery collected from his travels. As in verbal anagrams, he rearranged his images to ‘discover a hidden message,’ one that brings the ordinary, the unique, and the universal into his own collaged-image patterns. As always, though the photographs record *his* experience, Rauschenberg left it up to the viewer to supply the narrative, to make a personal connection among the images the artist brought to paper.”

The rhythmic composition of the painting reflects Rauschenberg's involvement in dance and performance. Its imagery seems to represent the decaying symbols of American prosperity thrown out in a yard sale.

David Salle describes *Songs for Sale* as "a cornucopia of American images." In developing the composition, the artist was inspired by the American musical theatre, which is reflected in the title. The composition is analogous to popular music and dance; it is full of syncopated and contrapuntal rhythms. "It's like a big piece of sheet music," Salle says of his mural. "Like a 19<sup>th</sup> century camping song or saloon song, grabbing disparate elements of the American Vernacular."

The central image of the mural is that of painting itself – a canvas stretcher turned away from the viewer. The painting seen from behind is a classic image from American art history referring both to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century *trompe l'oeil* tradition and to the self-reflexive attitude of much recent art. The composition flows out in both directions from this center point of the reversed canvas. It is as if both ends of the painting could be brought together to form a continuous band, a great encircling loop. The disparate images fly and scatter through the painting space; the composition is fluid, almost liquid. The numerous shifts in scale keep the eye pulsing across the picture surface; it is a kind of perpetual motion machine for the eyes. There is also a feeling of sensual pleasure; the painting overflows with images of things to eat and drink, to touch, and hear.

The imagery is Pop and contemporary, but also refers to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century tradition of romantic transcendentalism. The work has the feeling of a circus sideshow; it invites the viewer to lose himself; to abandon, for a moment, linear reason in favor of heightened sensations. The painting is like a romantic journey through an expansive natural and cultural landscape. It is an essentially optimistic work which describes the feeling of living today with a "can-do" sensibility, in open and external terms. The artist wishes to reaffirm an engaging and central place of painting in American life.

*Show Your Bones* is Michael Bevilacqua's largest and most ambitious painting. Its title refers to the way the imagery of the painting sums up the artist's influences and his own history as an artist. The structure of the work corresponds to the structure of sampling and layering in contemporary musical composition. It also reflects the spliced and layered structure of contemporary consciousness. Bevilacqua's composition includes two surrogate self portraits, the doorway to his former studio, and a still life of wine bottles and spray cans, an allusion to the way he learned to paint as a teenager. There are also quotations from some of his earlier paintings and the big number 7 from the side of his painted racecar. There is also an array of images from album covers and music videos that intersect with his artistic interests. There are references to Public Image Limited, Gorillaz, Radiohead, and his current favorite band Wolfmother.

Robert Rauschenberg's *Ten Yard Sale* is presented courtesy of PaceWildenstein

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