

**LEO KOENIG INC.**

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*For Immediate Release:*

**Kristin Calabrese**

"Everlasting Gobstopper"

September 14 through October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004

Opening reception Tuesday September 14<sup>th</sup>, 6-8 pm

**Leo Koenig Inc.** is delighted to announce the opening of our fall season with a solo exhibition of new paintings by Los Angeles artist **Kristin Calabrese** entitled "**Everlasting Gobstopper**". The title is culled from "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory", the artist's favorite movie as a child, and is a fleeting insight into her thought process. In the movie, Gob refers to a mouth, and gobstopper could be thought of as either a specific candy or as *something that would render someone permanently speechless*. In this series of new paintings, the artist addresses head-on, issues that are traditionally left unspoken, while at the same time, in effect, *desiring to render the viewer speechless*. Politics, intimacy, emotionally charged confessional themes, often deemed as "taboo" in artmaking, are playfully but pointedly explored.

Calabrese's paintings are imbued with multiple layers of meaning. Intentionally and intensely charged with psychological implications, the canvases eerily resonate on a subconscious level. Though in many cases Calabrese's imagery seems at first benign, there is a troubling sense of apprehension that permeates her sense of play. In "There's No Telling What the Future May Hold", for instance, Calabrese has painted cardboard boxes that are stacked to the very top of the painting's frame. Painted in pastel colors, the effect is oddly beautiful and engaging. Yet one cannot help being overwhelmed by a sense of potential force that quietly looms, barely contained within each one of the enormous stack of closed boxes. Conversely, in the painting "The Price of Oil", Calabrese is unabashedly political. This work is a monumental effort, and anchors the exhibition. Here, instead of boxes, bodies are stacked, meticulously rendered, and enveloping the entire picture frame. The painting is a languid heap of young souls that have collapsed upon each other, as though imploding upon their own promise.

Calabrese's ability to careen through sensitive subject matter with such an abject tenacity results from an underpinning steeped in formalism. Throughout her oeuvre there has always been equal focus of these concerns: abstraction mediated through illusionistically painted objects, the denial and reinforcement of concepts relating to the flatness of the picture plane, the formalization and elevation of low culture, and wrapping the viewer in an alien, underlying field. It is ultimately her consummate paint handling skills and use of color and plane that both allows her to transgress the status quo, and seduces us to safely navigate the formidable subject matter embodied in her work.

Kristin Calabrese has had numerous solo exhibitions in the United States and Europe. As well, her work has been included in exhibitions at the Seattle Art Museum, WA, The Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA., and the San Francisco Art Institute, CA. and such prestigious collections as the Neuberger Berman and Saatchi. She is represented in Los Angeles by Gagosian Gallery. This is Kristin Calabrese's first solo exhibition in New York City.