

Leo Koenig, New York

249 Centre Street  
NY-10013 New York

### artists & participants

gelitin, Torben Giehler, John Kacere, Tony Matelli, Erik Parker, Alexis Rockman, Tom Sanford

### press release

Leo Koenig Inc. is pleased to announce the last exhibition in its current space, a group exhibition entitled "Leaving Cockaigne". Leo Koenig Inc. which has been situated at 249 Centre Street for over 4 years, will be moving to 545 West 23rd Street in Chelsea in May.

Derived from Middle English and Middle French, from a word that essentially means "cake", Cockaigne has been known from medieval times as the mythical land of milk and honey. Cockaigne was a peasant's fantasy, offering the sweet dream of relief from backbreaking labor and the daily struggle for meager food. In the Middle Ages, many songs and poems were circulated about the place. Absurdist and Surrealist artists could have easily taken cues from this lore, where roasted birds fell from the sky like rain, trees produced ripe fruit all year round and people were arrested for working. Artist renderings depicted the imaginary Cockaigne as well, in forms of engravings and paintings. A well-known case in point is Brueghel's "The Land of Cockaigne". In this work, the darker side of utter contentment is highlighted. Brueghel's targets are gluttony and sloth, portraying fat, repulsive drunkards, passed out with symbols of spiritual impotence surrounding their visages.

"Leaving Cockaigne" is meant to be an ironic and up to date glimpse at these very themes. Contemporary life often teeters between the world of abundance and over-indulgence. Celebrity culture and its flipside of puritanical moralizing seem to be equally sensational and repugnant. In "Leaving Cockaigne", the participating artists have created works that are not so much a critique of these seductions, but perhaps a winking call to pause from their ever-present, gravitational tug.

Hedonistic abandon and a sense of play are mainstays of Gelatin's oeuvre. Often deliberately confronting fears or phobias first associated with childhood, there is a sincere joy evidenced in the installations, performances and static works that this 4 member art collective creates. In Torben Giehler's digitized landscapes, we are transported to a virtual utopia. Skewed perspectives give viewers the approximation of speed while blazing colors coax an excursion into the Hyper-real. John Kacere's paintings of women's bottoms replete with lacy / transparent lingerie are the pinnacle of voyeuristic pleasures. Though a decidedly Victoria's Secret stylized version of womanhood, the paintings are undeniably celebratory. Tony Matelli's sculpture "Fucked"

depicts a sweet-faced primate suffering the fate of Saint Sebastian, and then some. Wounded, but still standing, "Fucked" epitomizes Matelli's sly take on present-day dilemmas. Psychedelic, and hallucinatory are words that have often been used to describe Erik Parker's paintings. In his most recent works, Parker has become more indulgent with his forms, sprouting asymmetrically, threatening to evolve off the frame. Contained within these forms are the nuggets of a collective cultural consciousness, deliberately engaging us in a game that utilizes our own unique memory of events. Alexis Rockman delves into the darkest possible consequences of our collective avarice. Gorgeously painted scenes depict futuristic landscapes struggling to thrive, finally devoid of human intervention. Hip Hop culture, religious devotion, recklessness, martyrdom and greed all collude in Tom Sanford's paintings. Incorporating devices from Christian Icon and Renaissance painting, Sanford creates scenes canonizing rap stars such as Tupak Shakur, Biggie, Eminem, Icecube, 50 Cent, P Diddy and others. Kelli Williams offers extremely detailed, jewel-like works that depict complex scenes of demonic amusements and sexual excess. Evoking references to Hieronymus Bosch and Goya, Williams paints a bacchanal that verges on the terrifying.