

**TONY MATELLI***New Works*

January 12 – February 17, 2007

545 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street

Leo Koenig Inc. is pleased to announce the opening of a solo exhibition by artist Tony Matelli.

Tony Matelli has always been interested in the underdog. He has become well known for his hyper-realistic sculptures often depicting characters and things just barely getting by; things nearly dead, hopelessly lost or otherwise totally unwanted. These sculptures serve as metaphors for our own social malaise and our general struggle for survival. They mimic inner states of desolation, panic, ambivalence and despair; frequent conditions associated with trying to locate ones self within our social world.

The chimpanzee has for some years been a figure in Matelli's work as a stand in for the human id, or the human subconscious. For this exhibition he uses them to depict a violently upended social order: the poor eating the rich, the weak overtaking the powerful. Similarly, another ongoing project is Weeds, made in bronze to look exactly like the real thing and surreptitiously placed in the gallery. The weed, as always, is a persistent unwanted intruder and Matelli uses them as an emblem of struggle, and perseverance. They celebrate debasement and mock cultivation, an impulse that is simultaneously political and deeply personal.

Also in this exhibition are Veg. Head, a self-portrait rendered in old, mouldy vegetables, and A Fucking Mess, a sculpture of hopelessly tangled rope. Both are reflections Matelli's inner state of incertitude, and unease. Fuck It, Free Yourself! is a small sculpture of burning money, casually set on a plain domestic table. It is perhaps the most direct example of Matelli's new ambivalent social order; an eternal flame commemorating total disregard.

Tony Matelli has exhibited extensively in the US and in Europe. His work was most recently seen in "5 Billion Years," at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and Into Me/Out of Me, at P.S. 1 MOMA New York, travelling to KW Berlin Institute of Contemporary Art. Upcoming projects include Evolution: Tony Matelli/Alexis Rockman, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Still Life, at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, New Zealand, and Die Macht der Dinge – The Power of Things, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin.