

TONY MATELLI*The Old Me*

January 10 – February 8, 2008

545 West 23rd Street

Leo Koenig Inc. is pleased to open the New Year with a solo exhibition of two new works by Tony Matelli. For his exhibition entitled *The Old Me*, Matelli focuses on the ideas of rebirth and reinvention. Known for his hyper realistic sculptures, Matelli often depicts characters, or things that are barely getting by; things nearly dead, hopelessly lost or otherwise, totally unwanted. His interest has always been in the underdog.

Serving as metaphors for our own social malaise and general struggle for survival, Matelli's sculptures mimic inner states of desolation, panic, ambivalence and despair. These states are often associated with trying to locate ones self within our social world. Formerly his works have addressed an inescapable sense of doom. In this particular exhibition, however, Matelli has introduced a glimmer of hope.

With a nod to 17th century Vanitas painting, Matelli presents a double self-portrait; two caricatures of the artist, seemingly made of vegetable parts (they are in fact painted bronze). In one portrait the vegetables are fresh, and robust, while nearby they have rotted and collapsed. The image of the two figures is comically poignant, one contemplating its own inevitable demise. The glimmer exists in the form of some new growth sprouting from the rotted head. A resurrection. The other sculpture in the show is *The Old Me*. It consists of a few airbrushed headshots of the artist, placed on a table and burning. A classic Vanitas, *The Old Me* burns continuously throughout the course of the exhibition constantly reminding us that death always precedes rebirth.

Tony Matelli has exhibited extensively in the US and in Europe. His work was most recently seen in "I am as you will be," the *Skeleton in Art*, Cheim & Reid Gallery, and "Baroque Biology" at the CAC Cincinnati, and currently in "Undone," at the Whitney Museum, Altria. Tony Matelli lives and works in Brooklyn.