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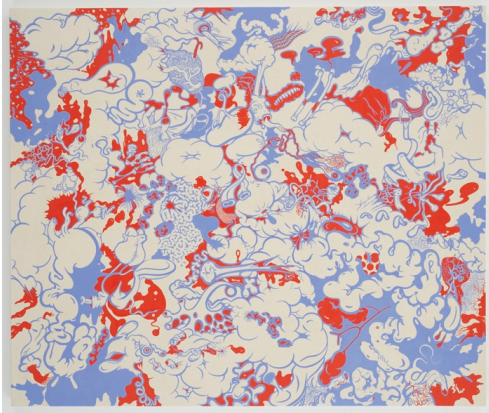
SUE WILLIAMS Project for the New American Century

September 11 - October 25, 2008

Opening reception: Thursday, September 11, 6 - 8 PM

Press preview with the artist: September 11, 5 - 5:30 PM

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American Enterprise, 2008, Oil and acrylic on canvas
62 x 52 inches, 157.5 x 132.1 cm

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings and drawings by Sue Williams. The artist has exhibited widely throughout Asia, Europe, and the United States with one-person exhibitions at the Carpenter Center at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (2003); IVAM, Valencia, Spain (2003); Vienna Secession, Vienna, Austria (2002); Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, Palm Beach, Florida (2002); and Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland (1997); among others. Her numerous group exhibitions recently include *The Third Mind*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2007); *Fast Forward: Collections for the Dallas Museum of Art*, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas (2007); *Comic Abstraction: Image Breaking, Image Making*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2007); *Into Me/ Out of Me*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City,

New York (2006); and *Still Points of the Turning World: SITE Santa Fe's Sixth International Biennial*, SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico (2006). This is the artist's debut solo exhibition at David Zwirner.

In this exhibition, Williams fully merges figurative representation and lyrical abstraction, two distinct styles that have defined her artistic production over the last two decades. The artist first garnered attention in the late 1980s with gritty, provocative canvases that combined figure and text to tackle issues of sexual objectification and abuse. Throughout the 1990s, Williams radically shifted her focus, thrusting formalist concerns and painterly technique to the forefront, allowing form and color to supersede explicit content. In recent years, the artist has embraced the new challenge of uniting these disparate approaches to again enable her canvases as clear vehicles of protest. The resulting works evoke Williams' early comic book influences with crisp outlines and blocks of brilliant colors. Against raw canvas and transparent acetate, her glaring palette, which includes forceful red, glowing orange, saccharine pink, and neon green, conveys a sense of immediacy, energetic movement, and the artist's signature wry humor.

On first impression, the works appear as spontaneous passages of arabesques in space, but a closer look reveals grotesque anatomical details. Williams' previous references to sexual abuse have now morphed into strong political indictments. In the grand tradition of the satirist, she uses the brightly colored and luminous works to conceal scathing political criticism of United States foreign policy, the war in Iraq, and more broadly what she and many others consider "the long history of bloody interventions and brutal colonialism perpetrated globally by the most powerful nation." With a visual vocabulary of dismembered body parts, random bits of clothing and accessories, and billowing wafts of smoke, the artist draws the viewer's attention to the gory aftermath of a bombing or other ruthless destruction, juxtaposed against fragments of the consumerist culture that helps propel such atrocities.

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Williams derived the title of the exhibition, *Project for the New American Century*, from the Washington-based neo-conservative think tank founded in 1997 by William Kristol and Robert Kagan. Its 2000 "Project Paper," *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces, and Resources For a New Century*, provides a blueprint for military-enforced American hegemony in the Middle East and abroad. The document states, ". . . the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor" and its signatories included Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Zalmay Khalilzad, Jeb Bush, Francis Fukuyama, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Elliott Abrams, Norman Podhoretz, among others.

In Williams' painting, *Golfing at Northwoods* (2008), references are combined: Operation Northwoods, a CIA covert operation conspiracy plan proposed within the U.S. government in 1962, and California's Northwood Golf Club, built in 1928. Operation Northwoods called for CIA or other operatives posing as Cuban terrorists to kill innocent people and commit acts of terrorism in U.S. cities to create public support for a war against Fidel Castro-led Cuba. Northwood Golf Club was originally created for the ultra-exclusive, all-male Bohemian Club, and has been known as a place where heads of state and industry notoriously meet. Exploring the nexus of power and privilege, Williams' canvas bursts with golf balls and eyeballs, classic plaids, splintered clubs, and intestinal cords. The inherent violence of Williams' subject is underscored by her sardonically fragmented approach. Exceeding singular interpretation, the artist leads viewers to the realm of the unexpected, where differing associations emphasize different meanings.

In late 2008, Steidl/David Zwirner will publish an exhibition catalogue, with a text by art critic, Barry Schwabsky.