

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Paul McCarthy: Clean Thoughts**  
October 5 – November 2, 2002  
*opening reception: October 4, 6-8 pm*

Luhring Augustine is pleased to announce *Clean Thoughts* an exhibition of sculptures by Paul McCarthy. Informed by medium and process, these sculptures present recent explorations by the artist in the area of portraiture.

McCarthy has proven to be an artist who is highly influential to a generation of young artists and has consistently challenged the conventions of traditional art practice. In 1999 he made a larger than life sculpture that used Jeff Koons' porcelain and ceramic sculpture *Michael Jackson and "bubbles"*, 1988 as a point of departure. This piece led to the development of a series of sculptures that have pushed the limits of abstraction and exaggeration. The first pieces in the series are painted fiberglass casts of the two figures but with enlarged hands, heads and feet in relation to their smaller bodies. While making this sculpture McCarthy stopped, keeping the first attempt; putting the sculpture in its rough state in storage until 2000. He then made a second start finishing the fiberglass pieces. When he returned to the original piece, he first cast it in silicon, then in fiberglass titled *Michael Jackson Fucked Up, (fiberglass plug)*. This rougher piece is the opposite in materiality of its predecessor; it is held together by Bondo and exposed steel pipes. The next evolution of his idea was in the form of the *Michael Jackson, Big Head (bronze)*; the heads, hands and feet of the figures along with the base of the sculpture are enlarged even further, the exaggeration and the weight of the material augment this sculpture's psychological presence. The final incarnation of the original *Michael Jackson and "bubbles"* returns to McCarthy's original painted fiberglass cast but in the form of a larger than life cutout photograph of the piece.

Other works in this exhibition show McCarthy exploring new genres. He has begun a project based on pirates; here he makes classical busts of fictional pirates in his characteristic style. These are portraits of a new cast of characters due to appear in a future McCarthy movie project. Another current endeavor involves a large-scale public sculpture project for the city of Rotterdam; this is a 25-foot tall bronze sculpture of Santa Claus holding a butt plug. McCarthy is showing a smaller example of this sculpture in silicon. He will also unveil Peter, Paul, a recent sculptural self-portrait.

This exhibition comes on the heels of the opening of the first major retrospective survey of McCarthy's work. The exhibition began at MOCA, LA, in 2000 and has since traveled to the New Museum of Contemporary Art, the Villa Arson, Nice and the Tate Liverpool. There is also a traveling exhibition of McCarthy's video works, which opened at the Kunstverein Hamburg in Germany and is presently at the Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem, The Netherlands. Catalogs accompany both exhibitions.

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