

Kenny Schachter conTEMPorary @ 14 Charles Lane  
March 10th — April 6th 2004

Kenny Schachter conTEMPorary is proud to present the first U.S. solo show of the Portuguese artist, Antonio Olaio.

Working in many mediums, Olaio conjures catchy pop tunes, produces seductive music videos and at the same time pairs them with memorable pop paintings. There have been art bands, and artists directing music videos, but a troubadour who paints and produces music videos to boot? Olaio truly is what one rarely, if ever, encounters in art since the one-namers: an original. The paintings themselves have a dollop of surrealism, outsider art, text-based conceptualism and pop pizzazz. Chez Louise, Chez Marcello presents a picture plane separated into two segments by what could be different windows, one on top of the other, in a mountainside apartment flat. Chez Louise is dominated solely by a crisp blue sky, while beneath Marcello peers out at a glorious view of a snowcapped mountain peak.

In *I Think Differently Now That I Can Paint*, a hammer is raised in an act of creative destruction with paints oozing forth from the head like squirts of cum from a throbbing cock. Maybe now Olaio's facility with pigment has reached a threshold where he can smash at conventions and create new paradigms, increasing the size of his mental member in the process.

In *My Left Hand Keeps on Changing*, a cropped, t-shirt clad torso is cradling his own left hand which is swathed in a bandage. Might this painting present the emasculated artist, suffering for his creativity, a martyr in exposing latent truths to us all? As he hones his craft, questioning accepted canons along the route, the artist morphs and suffers as he acquires knowledge and skill, and bears the burden of portraying our fallibility and weakness.

So, is the grass always greener? Does Olaio suffer from pop star-itis, blind and foolish celebrity worship, the opiate of our time? Does he just want to be Mick Jagger or Lenny Kravitz? Probably not, as his folk-like ditties, cheerful, cute and ironic, yet hardly syrupy or devolving into pure kitsch, sound more like Weird Al Yankovic songs. His tunes may be a little tainted with nostalgia and sappiness, but there is also a touching sincerity, an upbeat message of romanticism and hope for love and salvation. And rather than hark back on allusions to obvious imagery of such emotionally suggestive material, Olaio has created a video akin to a cyborg Arlo Guthrie. To top it all off, Olaio's songs have great beats that you can't squeeze out of your head for years and years.

—Kenny Schachter