



## BUBBLEGUM POP

British-born conceptual artist Adam McEwen's latest exhibition, "8:00 for 8:30," politely invites viewers to drinks before dinner. That is, of course, before he—with stinging British wit—confronts his audience with the legacy of war, the cruelty of mass culture and the way in which history shapes perception. "The works revolve around the theme of a gap between an account of history in the late '50s and an account today," McEwen explains. For what is it that causes the bulk of British families to christen their dogs "Bomber" (after Arthur Harris, the man responsible for "saturation" or "area" bombs on residential areas like Dresden)? Inspired by a rush of literature reexamining Germany's devastation—including works such as Anthea Bell and W.G. Sebald's *On the Natural History of Destruction*—McEwen uses his paintings and photographs to strike at history's gray areas.

History, it should be noted, has treated McEwen well. He has

had shows around the world and garnered a prominent place at this year's Whitney Biennial. With this exhibition, McEwen continues a series of his "bubblegum paintings" featured in the biennial: abstract landscapes, chewed and glued onto a painted canvas to magnify the effect of desecration. Building on the traditions of Andy Warhol and Richard Prince, McEwen employs pop imagery and slogans to point out the hypocrisy in cultural norms. McEwen's exhibitions become a theater of the absurd; he captures the optimism and the oblivion of raising a white flag to planes 20,000 feet overhead. But even more so, McEwen analyzes what happens at 200 feet, evoking Donald Trump and the folly of an urban culture that obsesses over the permanence of its monuments. *Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, 526 W. 26th St., No. 213, (212) 243-3335. Sept. 7–Oct. 14.* ★ Alex Gartenfeld • "Lefrak City No. 8" by Adam McEwen (2006)