

Adam McEwen, "History is a Perpetual Virgin endlessly and repeatedly Deflowered by successive generations of Fucking Liars"

Nicole Klagsbrun, through Nov 27 (see Chelsea).

New Yorkers rarely take time to interpret the neon signs and billboards that fill our peripheral vision. How often do you see the word PARK, for instance, and wonder why it indicates a concrete lot and not a green space? Following in the tradition of artists such as Richard Hamilton and Richard Prince, Adam McEwen makes catchy but complex presentations of words and slogans that question our often laissez-faire attitude.

In two paintings installed above the gallery's front desk, the black text BAD GURU springs out from a neon background. This mock mantra implies



Adam McEwen, *Bad Guru*, 2004.

multiple references, including the trend among politicians to unabashedly consult religious mentors. The in-

stallation *Shoegazer (Bonus Version)* (2004) makes visual puns on its title by using a photograph of a record cover featuring Michael Jackson's feet; a drawing by McEwen's assistant of a shoegazing musician; an upside-down image of the lynched Mussolini and his mistress strung up by their feet, and the type of low-slung mirror found in shoe stores.

Also on view is a series of obituaries of celebrities from Nicole Kidman to Bill Clinton. Except for the fact that the text fails to cite the cause of death—and that none of the people have actually died—they could pass for the real thing. The slickness of McEwen's take on pop culture's ability to absorb and equalize the macabre and the mundane may appear easy at first. But, like the signs they critique, they become impressively complicated on closer reading.—*Emily Speers Mears*