

Press Reviews

Claire Selvin 'A Great, Somewhat Unsung Master of Contemporary Painting': Peter Saul to Have New Museum Survey in 2020', *Artnews*, September 2019

ARTnews

'A Great, Somewhat Unsung Master of Contemporary Painting': Peter Saul to Have New Museum Survey in 2020

BY *Claire Selvin* POSTED 09/19/19 12:32 PM



Peter Saul, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1975, oil on canvas.
FARZAD OWRANG/COURTESY NEW MUSEUM

At long last, Peter Saul, whose outlandish, vibrant paintings have examined American politics and capitalism through grotesque and often humorous imagery, is getting his first New York survey. The show, titled “Peter Saul: Crime and Punishment” and set to open on February 11 at the New Museum, will bring together some 60 paintings spanning the artist’s 50-year career.

In an interview with *ARTnews*, Massimiliano Gioni, artistic director at the New Museum and co-curator of the show, said that Saul’s focus on greed and corruption in America’s social and political histories “adds to the timeliness of the exhibition.”

“We live in a world that resembles the absurdity of Peter Saul’s paintings,” Gioni said, calling the artist’s canvases “radical and provocative.”

Saul’s “Ice Box” paintings from the 1960s, which explore American consumerism and pop culture, will be featured in the show. With references to comic book characters and cartoons like Superman and Donald Duck, these works positioned Saul as one of the Pop art strangest and most out-there artists.

Also on view will be the artist’s presidential portraits, including *Bush at Abu Ghraib* (2006), *Donald Trump in Florida* (2017), and *Reagan in Grenada* (1984), which portray their subjects as caricatures and address them in a wry, critical tone. Other pieces in the show, such as *Columbus Discovers America* (1992–95) and *Gulf War II* (2003), exemplify Saul’s ability to grapple with violent historical events through the use of surreal, dreamlike scenes that serve to underscore the chaos, horror, and injustice depicted.

Gioni noted Saul’s enduring impact on artists working today, including Nicole Eisenman, who is known for her figurative paintings and sculptures. “Peter has been a great, somewhat unsung master of contemporary painting since late 1950s and an artist whose work has proven influential to a few generations of artists,” he said. “He is a hero to many artists.”