

# Marlborough

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## RED GROOMS Marlborough Gallery September 25 – October 27, 2007

The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are pleased to announce that an exhibition of recent paintings by Red Grooms will be held from Tuesday, September 25 to Saturday, October 27, 2007. Marlborough Gallery proudly celebrates a history of showing the artist's work for over thirty years. During this time Grooms has continually re-invented himself with powerful and vibrant new visions of the world he experiences both near his home in New York City and abroad, always in his own inimitable style. Each exhibition represents a distinctive tapestry of imagery and subject matter from one of the most fervent and fertile minds in art.

Grooms new body of work consists entirely of paintings rather than his well-known sculptures and constructions, allowing him to fit ever more complex and detailed imagery into his already packed views. The show comprises over forty paintings and is an exploration of several disparate time periods, from medieval life in Europe to depictions of the colorful artists and adventurers of the 1920s, to the mysterious world of film noir and detective thrillers of the 1930s and 1940s, to the journalistic black and white photographs of Diane Arbus in the 1960s. They are all bound together both formally and stylistically through the uniquely Groomsian humor and psychological insight ever present in his work.

The first group of paintings explores medieval subject matter and the rich iconography of *The Unicorn Tapestries* of The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Cloisters. Initially inspired by Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century*, Grooms created a cycle of paintings that are anchored by six eight by eight foot Unicorn paintings which are as dense and complex as any in Grooms' already accomplished oeuvre. The frenetic scenes one normally associates with Grooms – bustling New York streets filled with eccentric characters – have been replaced by equally interesting medieval characters in all their silk and chain mail finery hunting the mythical unicorn, beginning with *The Unicorn Purifies the Stream* and continuing with *The Unicorn Strikes Back*. The medieval cacophony continues in a tavern scene entitled *Four and Twenty Blackbirds*. As Dick Kagan noted about these recently in *Art & Antiques*, "Grooms presents a gallimaufry of plumed lords, wimpled ladies and fierce-visaged archers firing their crossbows, along with prancing horses, barking dogs and flotillas of gliding swans."

Similarly, in a series of smaller paintings Grooms has trained his incisive gaze on the romantic characters and costumes of the early 20th century. Here horses and crossbows are traded in for an early bi-plane in *Major Raymond, aux commandes d'un M.F. 7 bis*, a wimple is replaced by a jaunty straw boater in *The Bostonian*, and lords and ladies give way to depictions of trapeze artists, swells, and famous painters and sculptors in his homages *Morandi*, *Brancusi (After a Photograph by Himself)*, and *Sargent in 1925*. His affection for these modern masters is clear. Grooms takes these characters and presents them to us as friends and intimates with all their fascinating foibles and talents.

More grist for the mill of Grooms' attention are the detectives, pool sharks, cons and gun molls of the Depression Era and 1940s. Again, we see the uniquely American mythology epitomized by Hollywood movies. Grooms depicts the highs and lows of big city life in paintings such as *Eggs over Midnight*, *The Client*, *Paradise Alley*, *Crime Scene I* and *Pool Shark*, and recalls the similar focus of the twentieth century artists of the Ash Can School.

The most ambitious of the modern subjects are represented by two large canvases painted almost entirely in black and white with small additions of sepia color. One sees the hopeful futuristic vision of Walt Disney's new streamlined vehicle in *Anaheim Light*. In *Arbus at the Met*, Grooms takes as a starting point a subject he has previously explored – famous figures incongruously milling about together in The Metropolitan Museum – but here used the cast of characters from the many famous photographs of Diane Arbus. Here we see the many characters from her photos that are now part of the pop-lexicon of American life in the 1960s: Tiny Tim, the Giant, the Kennedy supporter, and others. But in fulfilling a typically Groomsian fantasy the figures meet and mingle as they never have outside of our experience of Arbus' work. Some figures have even been made into couples that never existed. The result is a rich modern tapestry of late-20th century American life.

Red Grooms was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1937. He studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the New School for Social Research in New York City and at the Hans Hoffman School of Fine Arts in Provincetown, MA. Along with developing the painted relief as both a painting and sculpture, Grooms invented the three dimensional form called "sculpto-pictorama" that allows the viewer to walk through and interact with an environment created by the artist's vision.

Grooms' art has been the subject of three retrospective shows at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia in 1985, the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, in 1987 and the National Academy of Design, NY, in 2001, specifically devoted to his graphic work. This last exhibition traveled to eight other venues in the United States through 2004. He has also been honored with several important survey exhibitions, most recently at the Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY in 2005, The Frist Center for Visual Arts, Nashville, TN, and the Katonah Museum of Art, NY in 2003. He has received numerous awards and commissions throughout his career, most recently, the Lifetime Achievement Award given by the National Academy of Design in 2003.

Grooms' work can be found in thirty-nine museums throughout the world. Among them are the following, The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; The Brooklyn Museum, NY; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

An illustrated color catalogue will be available at the time of the exhibition.

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