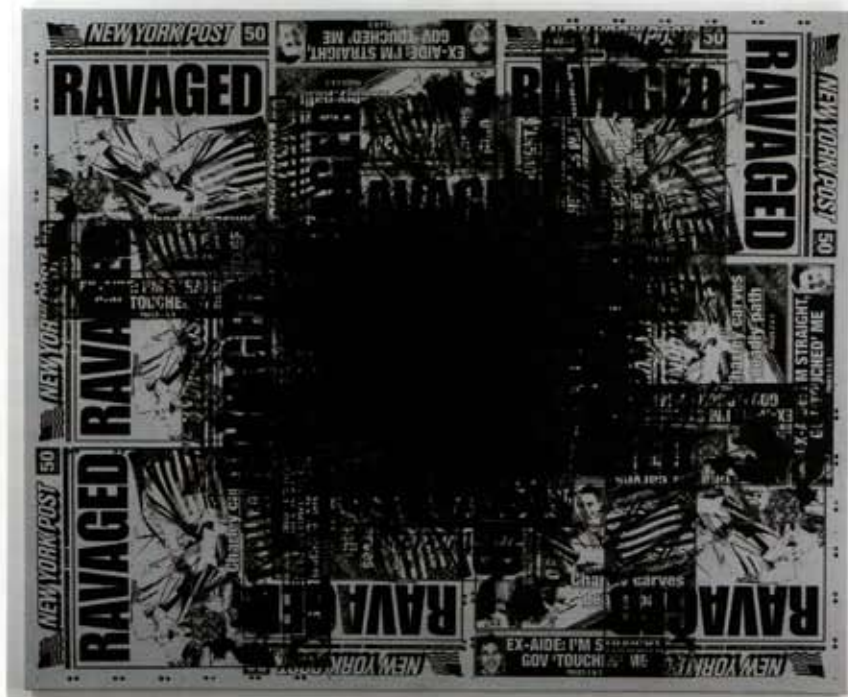


Below: *Ravaged*, 2007. Silkscreen on canvas. 84 x 102 in.

Below Left: *Too Much Stress*, 2007. Silkscreen on canvas. 30 x 24 in.



SCOTT HUG
JOHN CONNELLY PRESENTS

Written by Yaelle Amir

Images courtesy of John Connelly Presents

*With a medley of celebrity snapshots, self-help mantras, and flashy newspaper headlines, Scott Hug delineates our society's immensely disproportionate infatuation with celebrity culture. In **Too Much, Too Little, Too Late** he applies the distinct Warhol aesthetic to recently found imagery from various mainstream media sources, namely the **New York Post**.*

For this exhibition, Hug created ten colorful silkscreen prints of celebrity photographs derived from the **New York Post's** notorious Page Six gossip column. Images of the likes of Lindsay Lohan, Jessica Alba, and Heather Locklear appear above suggestive or demeaning captions, such as "Get well soon," "Chicken charity," and "Enough already." Thus, rather than painting glorifying or intriguing portraits of celebrities in the Warholian vein, he uses and enhances images culled from the very source that undermines their character.

Also dispersed around the gallery are several large black-and-white silkscreen prints, each composed of identical reproductions of a **New York Post** front page. The various featured stories—including the devastation of Hurricane Charley and the scandal surrounding New Jersey Governor Jim McGreevey—were sensationalized by the paper's use of a theatrical image and dramatic headline. Hug covered the surface of the canvas with multiple copies of the front page and forcefully painted over its center in black. It therefore appears as if the pages are dissolving or imploding into a black hole—similar to a loud sound that climaxes and then metamorphoses into an unrecognizable state. Both the repetition and vigorous gesture point to our culture of excess that diverts our attention from the actual story struggling to resonate beyond the ostentatious front page.

In works such as "Cry Baby" (2007) and "JFK" (2007), Hug turns celebrity culture back unto the viewer. Two iconic images—a tearful Paris Hilton captured following her prison sentencing and John F. Kennedy standing elegantly while wearing a pair of dark sunglasses—were each hung in a corner alongside a black mirror at a forty-five degree angle. This composition creates a three-way viewing effect, where the reflections of both the celebrity and the spectator merge upon the glossy surface.

In the adjoining room, a remix of Britney Spears' single "Gimme More" reverberates in the background as a machine steadily dispenses a slight layer of smoke into the air. In the center, Hug placed a large recreation of a recent **TIME Magazine** cover that featured media mogul Rupert Murdoch. In an act of humor and ridicule, he cut out a pumpkin face from Mr. Murdoch's sly portrait. Positioned behind this sculpture is the work "Spin Control," a hypnotic colorful spiral that recalls the Mac computer's icon of processing data. In both its original context, as well as in this exhibition, this symbol represents a state of limbo—a moment between idleness and activity, during which we allow our thoughts to drift into a state of numbness and apathy. Combined with the other elements, it poignantly summarizes the overall effects of mainstream media.

Through a process of editing and re-contextualizing, Hug articulates our culture's preoccupation with celebrities, in which Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears' latest pitfalls make the front page of the daily paper, consequently pushing aside reports on the raging war and economic strife. The works in this exhibition highlight the grotesque tactics used by the media (most notably Mr. Murdoch's conglomerate that includes Fox News and the **New York Post**) to create hype and sensationalism. At first, this exhibition appears as yet another commentary on the shallowness of celebrity culture; however, it quickly becomes clear that those in the hot seat are not the famous figures at all, but rather we, the observers, who overindulge in the spectacle that the media fashions from their lives.