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Images courtesy of the artist and Leo Koenig Inc.



Left: "Yue Minjun vs. Roger Clemens," 2008. Oil, acrylic & fake silver on paper. Overall: 96" x 64"; each panel: 48" x 64".
Right: Installation view of Mr. Hangover

In *Mr. Hangover* at Leo Koenig Inc., Tom Sanford presents a lighthearted critique of pop culture with a series of works on paper that mimic commercial event and product posters that litter city streets. The exhibition is comprised of a wall of mock posters, a blown up reproduction of the artist's Chase credit card, and three larger works comically depicting pop scenes, all tacked to the wall in *laissez-faire* fashion. Filled with images of reality TV stars, movie characters, mass-produced food and beverages (and their packaging waste), cult leaders, and drug-scandalized professional athletes, the work falls somewhere between a critical look at pop culture and the product of an artist's attempt to clear out his head in the midst of a 21st century blitzkrieg.

More than a mere visual regurgitation of the artist's everyday experiences in a post-globalized world, Sanford's meditation on (and possible judgment of) pop culture is apparent both within the narratives of his chaotically composed scenes and through the juxtaposition of icons and images in his poster series. In the two-paneled painting on paper "Yue Minjun vs. Roger Clemens," the artist paints himself passed out at his worktable, surrounded by a tower of empty beer cans. Floating above him, his dream plays out as a beefed up, syringe-studded Yankee vet Roger Clemens squeezes multiple figures of Yue Minjun, the Chinese contemporary artist well known for creating pop portraits of himself mid-grin.

Here, Sanford takes a humorous jab at all players present by cutting through the veneer of the famous artist or the pro athlete in order to expose unglamorous realities behind the surface: the American artist appears beer-faced and burger-filled in a post-consumption doze, the steroid-using professional athlete appears overly pumped up, and the Chinese artist who created a career based on the production and sale of his own image appears in his classic grin—yet, his image has been produced by a hand other than his own. Everyone here has lost something: the privacy of the artist's dream, the credibility of an athlete's career, a pop figure's control over his own image.

Along the main gallery wall, two gridded rows of posters playfully "advertise" everything from reality TV star Tila Tequila to a bag of Fritos chips. Though varied in imagery, a theme of over-consumption and abuse fills the space between each poster: Barry Bonds on steroids, a floating dollar bill, an open Heineken can. Unlike their commercial influences, these posters are visibly handmade, and as such, their one-of-a-kind nature prohibits their subjects from maintaining the cool distance of their mass-produced derivations. Barry Bonds surrounded by syringes and a flashy gold background doesn't look heroic; he just looks awkward.

In the gallery's smaller second room hang two paintings similar in style to "Yue Minjun vs. Roger Clemens." In "The Three Graces," three celebrities (Paris Hilton included) share a stripper pole as they ungracefully demonstrate their narcissism and party girl habits. Meanwhile, the pseudo-self-portrait "Tom & Alex in Bed" provides a disarmingly personal sneak into the artist's bedroom as he cuddles with his lover as they sleep. Despite the beer cans on the floor and the sneakers Tom wears in bed, which suggest his drunken evening preceding their sleep, there is an intimacy in this scene that the pop iconography of the exhibition's other works refuses to offer.

By filling scenes with pop cultural specifics, Sanford prevents his work from becoming "timeless." In *Mr. Hangover*, he attempts to demonstrate that in the American media-saturated 21st century, art's ability to transcend its commodity status and artists' ability to create work that supersedes their popular cultural realities are simply romantic notions of the past.