

VAN HANOS

by Annabel Osberg ·

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Van Hanos' paintings parodizing partisan preposterousness would be utterly comical if they didn't so mordantly reflect our circusy cultural reality. Cynically dubbed "Late American Paintings," his current show at **Chateau Shatto** concentrates social discord, political vagary and digital phoniness as a magnifying glass focuses sunlight. Enhancing his works' startling effect, Hanos applies old-fashioned oil painting finesse to such newfangled pictorial idioms as GIF's, memes and decals. No public figure, whether actual politician or fictional cartoon, is immune to flogging by his sardonic brush. *A Recent History of the United States of America* (all works 2017) portrays Obama, the Holy Family, The Lizardman bursting from a Hillary Clinton costume, a Trump-masked Godzilla and a skinned corpse all gambling together round a poker table doubling as ash tray. In *Trumpty Dumpty* (pictured above), wrathful My Little Ponies battle Frankensteinian baby-men wearing distended presidential miens. Amid the fray, cartoon light bulbs indicate infantile strokes of inspiration. The age-old semblance of academic realism sets off these provocative collage-like compositions in the same way that eminence belies outlandish proclamation. *Snakes and Ladders* depicts tentacles headed by Satan and Uncle Sam writhing like cyclonic vortices. Ophidian and cephalopod domination contravenes the traditional game of which Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* protagonist declared, "The solid rationality of ladders balances the occult sinuosities of the serpent." Hanos' apocalyptic caricatures breathe droll new life into the antiquated genre of history painting.