

LETTER FROM PETER SAUL



August 19, 1968

Dear Phil,

The natural reason why I have to write you about the slant step show is that Bill Wiley failed to ask me to take part in it. This puts any show off to a bad start and is the reason why I really go for the opposing, so called, "Funk" show at the Berkeley Art Museum.

If it seems to me that at the same time artists are freaking out the general population they are also winking knowingly at a wealthy and cultured minority, I tend to get mad and place myself on the side of the ordinary people, who maybe haven't had the good fortune to shake hands with important intellectuals but know a lot. Especially about making a living in wierd ways by servicing wierd needs of this class like hairdressing, vinyl clothing and underground movies. Frankly I'm in this business myself and it disgusts me to be appealed to on ultra-exclusive professional grounds when where the action is is somewhere else entirely -- Fillmore Auditorium, history department, French literature, mass-production, the anti-war posters, beer, Peter Saul, his friends, etc.

This is a technical country and every young person has his technical excellence. Some type 3,000 words a minute, some have ideas about art, some want to improve architecture, sculpture, etc. This builds up the country or rather the business of the country through being a controlled revolution set up by the financial establishment for its young and lost aspirants to let off steam in a way which is constructive for big shots. This is a lousy situation. What I would have liked to see is work that is not only made in a shoddy manner, which it was, but also work that has a shoddy meaning that strikes at the heart of the intellectual minority by destroying its pretentious seriousness. This shoddy meaning was entirely absent from the work at the slant step show. We have here a revolution in interior decoration based

on the reality that in a really clean house which has sufficiently expensive furniture, a garbage can is as decorative as a Louis XVI mirror. This is coupled with coy reference to professional matters that are obscure for the mass of people. We have here at the Berkeley gallery a controlled technical discussion by aspiring professionals who wish to make contact with wealthy young people.

The only true revolution is one that strikes at the seat of power, the gallery, the museum, the professional magazine, the actual collector -- not some fictional crusty and dumb older person who lives next door. The true collector and lover of art is seen in the flesh driving his Porsche 912 in his plastic clothes towards his class in "relevant meaning" at the nearest art school. Hit the bastard!

This is a fucking syndrome and it is a real disappointment to me personally that so many of the young artists at the slant step show who revolt against well-made furniture by making their furniture shoddy and weak to look at (which is a good idea) should cut out from the revolution when it comes to what it all means and go reverent towards the financial history of modern American art instead of hitting where it hurts. It is extremely embarrassing to me to be able to understand this show because my understanding reveals that we're all very mischievous young middle-class whites who like to pull white-daddy's leg a little knowing this is the way to get your allowance faster. This show called slant step fills me with disgust.

Yours truly,

Peter Saul