

## Peter Drake

**Linda Warren**

Peter Drake's paintings of his father's toy soldiers, shown here under the title "All the King's Horses," magnify them to heroic scale, and in so doing both show off the beauty of the playthings' corroded surfaces and recall the forgotten fantasies of childhood.

The burnished decay of the painted toys was especially compelling, given that every imperfection, every bit of chipped and pockmarked paint, was reproduced with precision. Sometimes Drake set his subjects in grand panoramas and landscapes, but they were most moving when presented without any context or supporting detail. Astride a white steed, the straight-backed rider wearing full-dress regalia in *Tassel* (2008) loomed large, both literally, at almost seven feet high, and figuratively. In the hazy midnight blue background the figure floats in the unreal and infinite space of memory. *Warhorse* (2007) similarly offered a medieval horse and armored rider stripped of any contextual information that might invade or dilute the fantasy.

In a less successful experiment, Drake attempted to blend these childhood relics with modern technology. The video of horses and riders streaming across a screen did not bring the paintings to life but served only to highlight their subjects' frozen poses. And anyone who ever played with and treasured toys knows they possess an animate energy on their own without requiring the clumsy intervention of digital technology.

Drake's best works were the pared-down images, such as *Doughboy* (2008), that replicated the look of beat-up toys while evoking nostalgia for childhood imagination. —*Margaret Hawkins*



Peter Drake, *Warhorse*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 82 x 89"  
Linda Warren Gallery