

## Out There



# Shadowlands

Paul Zaloom thinks political humor is for puppets

**T**hink that things are tough for you? Try being an Arab-secular humanist-Quaker-Buddhist-bohemian. In Syria. Karagoz, the shadow-puppet star of Paul Zaloom's latest performance extravaganza, *The Mother of All Enemies*, is all of these things and more: He's also the target of a manhunt by Homeland Security and ex-gay Christian activists. Yet through it all, he manages to keep his head.

Karagoz, or rather Zaloom, hits Collective: Unconscious on Thursday, March 30, where *Mother* is part of "Neo-Sincerity: The Difference Between the Comic and the Cosmic Is a Single Letter," an exhibition curated by Amei Wallach at nearby Apex Art gallery.

Zaloom, 54, is a Bread & Puppet Theater veteran and says this solo performance is part of a self-styled "megalomaniacal" crusade to explore every puppet tradition under the sun. For *Mother*, he

draws on the time-honored Middle Eastern form of shadow play. While his hero is chased by a horde of adversaries, Zaloom flaunts his unbridled creativity—squawking loudly (he voices all the characters and background noises himself) while brandishing a bouquet of small sticks with puppets attached. The result is sort of like a mash-up of a fez-donning Benny Hill with Captain Kangaroo.

"I'm like a USO tour for the left," remarks Zaloom, who recounts his own real-life brush with a Marine Corps recruitment officer (a series of unfriendly e-mail exchanges) in one funny bit in the show. "The idea is to get people to laugh," he adds. "Everything else is secondary."

—Laura Silver

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**The Mother of All Enemies plays at Collective: Unconscious from March 30 through April 9. For more info, visit [apexart.org/events/zaloom.htm](http://apexart.org/events/zaloom.htm).**