

MASSIMODECARLO is pleased to announce the first exhibition of the American artist Marlon Mullen with the gallery, opening on July 15, 2021 at our gallery in Hong Kong.

Mullen was born in 1963 in Richmond, California. Since 1986 he has been working at NIAD Art Center, a non-profit that nurtures independence for neurologically diverse artists—Mullen has autistic spectrum disorder and expressive aphasia.

Rarely using spoken language, Mullen has found a way to interact with the outer world through the medium of painting. Often copying pages from art publications, auction catalogs and artist monographs with rich and energetic brushstrokes.

Mainly laying his canvases flat on a table, Marlon works looking down at them, reproducing the texts from his sources using a singular technique in which he mixes acrylic paints sometimes on the canvas itself.

The artist's vulnerability to communicate through an oral discourse is therefore converted into a creative process that interprets words solely for their formal value. It is no surprise then if the letters on his canvases disappear or simply vanish under layers of paint, while the image retains the majority of colours. The same happens for the shapes which Mullen often gets engaged with, such as blocks, straps, and twigs. Moreover, the artist is fascinated by barcodes and when he portrays covers with mailing labels, the parallel black marks often become the dominant colours.

His first solo show in Hong Kong presents an exceptional selection of works created across the years, from 2014 up to 2019.

Marlon Mullen's most recent work *Untitled*, 2019 was exhibited at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on the occasion of the 2019 SECA Art Award exhibition.

Marlon Mullen's works have been included in important group exhibitions such as the 2019 SECA Art Award exhibition, SFMOMA, San Francisco, CA (2019); *Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2019); *Way Bay 2*, U.C. Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA (2018); *Affinity*, Museum of Northern California Art, Chico, CA (2017); *Under Another Name*, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY (2014–15); and *Create*, BAMPFA (2011).

Mullen received the 2014 Wynn Newhouse Award.

His work is in the collections of San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; ICA Miami, Miami, FL; Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR; RISD Museum, Providence, RI; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY.

Marlon Mullen ( b. 1963, Richmond, CA), lives and works in Richmond at NIAD (National Institute of Art and Disabilities) since 1986 when he joined at the age of 23.

Mullen bases his paintings on found photographic images – mostly from lifestyle, news and contemporary art periodicals — which the artist uses as a departure point for his subsequent work.

In the process of developing a painting Mullen's original magazine pages usually become obscured, or literally abstracted, where an image is subsequently reduced to a graphic schema of interlocking colors and forms. Very similar to the beats created for hip hop, operating at the threshold between legibility and illegibility, Mullen's works lives within the multiple histories of 20th century modernism, while remaining highly personal.

Mullen is suffering from an autism spectrum disorder, for the most part non-verbal. It isn't entirely clear how much he can read, but he certainly has his own understanding of meaning when it comes to words. Specifically regarding the content of his paintings, he has not verbally communicated at length his intent or fascination with the images that he copies. However, his paintings are sufficient in informing us of the nuances of what he sees.