

Press Release

Christopher Le Brun *Momentarium*

6 July – 20 August 2022
27 Bell Street, London

“There aren't any reasons for painting. That's what's special about it. It doesn't need justification. It's essential that it's not used for other purposes. All of the things which will, as it were, take away from what's mysterious about it.

- Christopher Le Brun

For the artist's third exhibition with Lisson Gallery, Christopher Le Brun presents a comprehensive show that can be seen as a culmination of his work to date. The exhibition features some of his most ambitious work, including monumental triptychs and diptychs, providing an opportunity to see the development of modular compositions from singular pieces through to large and highly complex canvases.

Le Brun is still deeply committed to experimentation, exploring new techniques, palettes and dispositions, as experienced in the varying approaches adopted in these works. The exhibition features a number of large-scale multi-paneled oil on canvas paintings, including the eponymous work in the show, *Momentarium II* – referring to a collection of fleeting moments – a painting that feels like an account of time and consciousness made visible.

Alongside their powerful scale, there is a palpable sense of movement and rhythmic energy in this body of work, which often alludes to musical as well as literary references. The psychic and stylistic range of the presentation spans from *White Diptych*, a visually elusive painting that gathers colour and intensity before slowly fading as it approaches the edge of the canvas, to *The Waves*, a panoramic assembly of panels, dense with layers and accumulated colour touches. This is a painting that re-enacts the process of its making at all times of the day from first light until sunset and night. The title cites the 1931 novel by Virginia Woolf, a similar meditation on the structure and limitations of time and the self.

Presented in dialogue with the multi-part works are a series of recent acrylics on paper that act like modules of the larger compositions, revealing essential motifs and compositions but focused through a smaller scale. While embodying some approaches not previously seen in Le Brun's work, others incorporate simple vertical presences or rows and bars whose abstract simplicity nevertheless still hints at figuration, evoking his previous series of Stem Compositions, white patinated bronze sculptures.

The exhibition will also screen for the first time a new short film that sees Le Brun, now in his 70th year, preparing for the exhibition and discussing his practice and these latest works.

About the artist

Christopher Le Brun is one of the leading British painters of his generation, celebrated internationally since the 1980s, making both figurative and abstract work in painting, sculpture and print. He was an instrumental public figure in his role as

President of the Royal Academy of Arts in London from 2011 to 2019. He was awarded a Knighthood (Knight Bachelor) for services to the Arts in the 2021 New Year Honours.

Le Brun employs a mastery of touch and colour alongside a profound understanding of art history and a wide range of visual, musical and literary sources. He has remained consistent in adhering to what he feels to be the essential poetry and pleasure of painting for its own sake, led by intuition and visual imagination and resistant to external justification. His interest in the formal possibilities of painting has led recently to the development of modular compositions from single pieces through to large and highly complex canvases, triptychs and monumental multipart paintings, extending the limits of abstract pictorial composition. A heightened awareness of the physicality of the painting process with its dramatic tension between revealing and covering, has been a central feature of his work that unites all its phases whether abstract or figurative.

Born in Portsmouth in 1951, Christopher Le Brun trained at the Slade and Chelsea Schools of Art, London. In his early career, he was a double prizewinner at the John Moores exhibitions (1978, 1980), also showing in the Venice Biennale (1980) and the ground-breaking exhibition 'Zeitgeist' (1982) at the Martin-Gropius Bau, Berlin. His recent solo exhibitions have been held at the Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing, China (2021); Albertz Benda, New York, USA (2020); Lisson Gallery, Shanghai, China (2019); Lisson Gallery, London, UK (2018); the Southampton Art Gallery, Southampton, UK (2018); Wolfson College, Cambridge, UK (2018); Albertz Benda, New York, NY, USA (2017); The Gallery at Windsor, Vero Beach, FL, USA (2017); Colnaghi, London, UK (2015); Friedman Benda, New York, NY, USA (2014); New Art Centre, Wiltshire, UK (2010) and The New Art Gallery, Walsall, UK (2008). Le Brun served as a trustee of Tate from 1990–1995; The National Gallery from 1996–2003; the Dulwich Picture Gallery from 2000–2005; and as a founding trustee of the Royal Drawing School from 2003–2016. He was a trustee of the National Portrait Gallery between 2012–19. He was elected the first Professor of Drawing of the Royal Academy, London in 2000, where he also served as President from 2011–2021, the 26th since Sir Joshua Reynolds and the youngest since Lord Leighton in 1878.

His work is in many major museum collections including Tate Gallery, London, UK; Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; the British Museum, London, UK; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA; Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, Scotland; The Whitworth, Manchester, UK; Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing, China, and Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, USA. Le Brun's public sculptures include *Union (horse with two discs)* at the Museum of London; *City Wing* on the site of the former stock exchange at Threadneedle Street; and *The Monument to Victor Hugo* on the quayside in St Helier, Jersey.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, three in New York, and one in Shanghai, as well as forthcoming galleries in Beijing and Los Angeles. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estate of Leon Polk Smith.

In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima, Sean Scully and Stanley Whitney. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Ryan Gander, Van Hanos, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes, Wael Shawky and Cheyney Thompson.

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