

LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Jack Pierson

24 May – 3 August 2024
67 Lisson Street, London

Opening: 23 May, 6 – 8pm

For his first exhibition in London in over 20 years, New York-based artist Jack Pierson presents a new series of works that explore our experience of love, kinship, celebration, poetry, youth, and identity. Pierson diverted from the path of documentary photographers that he studied with in Boston, and was instead drawn to punk-influenced performativity, embracing non-linear, spontaneous compilations that prioritise the expression of individual freedoms over existing narratives. He has since, through a multi-disciplinary practice, challenged conventional hierarchies by commingling mediums equally. Featuring his signature word sculptures, photographs, a large-scale new array, and a series of folded photographic works, a journey through the exhibition invites viewers into a world where narratives, intimate and autobiographical, interact with those distinctly universal and inclusive.

A yellow hue echoes throughout the exhibition – a shift from Pierson’s typical blue, pink and grayscale themes – the centrepiece of this being *Yellow Array* (2024). A coalescence of archival pigment prints, C-type prints, cylindrical magnets, folded pigment prints, found posters, galvanized metal, paper, spray and watercolour paint, these large-scale compositions, spanning ten by fifteen-foot panels, intricately incorporate magazine pages, photographs, drawings, vintage poster and other ephemera, both personal and unfamiliar. Pierson’s meticulous process of addition and rearrangement of diverse components – either produced by Pierson himself or discovered during his travels – mirrors that of a collector; each material is afforded a prominent presence within the whole.

Pierson is acclaimed for his evocative word-sculptures and installations created by re-appropriating commercial signage and large-scale vintage lettering. The first word sculpture in the exhibition is titled *Peter Blake* (2024), named after the leading English visual artist who, having created the design for multiple iconic musical records including The Beatles’ 1967 album ‘Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band’ and the 2012 Brit Award statuette, became a key figure in the pop art movement. Pierson’s sculpture embodies the connection between the two artists – one which began in the 1960s when the young artist first encountered the work of Peter Blake distributed in the media. Years later, the artists would meet, with Blake inviting Pierson to visit his studio – an encounter that left a lasting impression on both. Blake himself was inspired to create a series of word sculptures bearing Pierson’s name: *Appropriating Jack Pierson*, *Copying Jack Pierson* and *Borrowing from Jack Pierson* (all 2002). While Pierson has been profoundly inspired by the work of Peter Blake – his own sculptural homage suggesting echoes of the playful and colourful arrangements of Blake’s work – this is the first time he has reciprocated this creative exchange by producing a word piece that directly references this history. *Peter Blake* also carries the legacy of the transformative period of cultural exchange between the UK and US in the 1960s, intertwining personal history with wider cultural influences. The exchange between Pierson and Blake serves as a testament to the power of artistic inspiration and collaboration, transcending time and distance to create connections within the ever-evolving landscape of contemporary art.

The exhibition will also feature a floor sculpture, *Everything you ever wanted* (2012), comprised of a stack of letters, and a grid of drawings titled *The Order of the Star* (2015). alongside additional word sculptures such as *Nostalgia*, *A Friend*, *You Are The Sun*, *Room For Angels*, *Thank You* and *Water* (all 2024), the latter a chain of painted wooden and metal letters that tumble down as if cascading from their position on the gallery wall.

About the artist

Jack Pierson employs photography, collage, sculptural assemblage and installation in pursuit of love, longing, kinship, poetry, celebration, youth, and identity. The artist's mode of non-hierarchical cultural compilation and a process of impulse-led editing allows Pierson to create personal and universal narratives across his multidisciplinary practice. Emerging from the 1980s milieu of the Boston School of documentarian photographers, Pierson was instead drawn into a world of gendered, punk-influenced performativity, and was greatly influenced by the more tactile work of his friend, Mark Morrisroe.

Pierson's move to New York via stays in Miami and Los Angeles saw the evolution of staging in his work. Depicting recollections of autobiographical nights out and days in the studio, he constructed melancholic sets of half-remembered experiences and occasional, ironic gestures of self-portraiture. Pierson's collagistic approach also applies to his photography and ongoing accumulations of imagery, which evoke shared notions of reminiscence and desire. His first word sculptures, composed of discarded signage letters removed from their intended context, were found on the streets of New York's East Village and introduced a multiplicity of meaning into Pierson's practice. They question what is staged and what is casual, a theme that is unquestionably his own, in which material, object, subject, fragment and life all coalesce.

Jack Pierson was born in 1960 in Plymouth, Massachusetts. He lives and works in New York and in California. He graduated from the Massachusetts College of Art in 1984 where he participated in the Studio for Interrelated Media, one of the earliest formal academic programs for the study of performance art. Recent solo presentations include *Jack Pierson* at Museo Ettore Fico Torino, Italy (2021); *Jack Pierson: 5 Shows from the '90s* at Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO, USA (2017); and *Jack Pierson* at CAC Málaga, Málaga, Spain (2009). Select group exhibitions include *High Desert Test Sites 2022 (HDS 2022): The Searchers* curated by Iwona Blazwick at Joshua Tree, CA, USA (2022); *Any distance between us* at RISD Museum, Providence, RI, USA (2021); *Photography's Last Century: The Collection of Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA (2020); and *Be Seen: Portrait Photography Since Stonewall* at Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, USA (2019). Pierson's work is found in major public collections, including Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA; CAPC Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA, USA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, USA; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, USA; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, USA, and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, USA.

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 City and East Hampton, and one in Shanghai. 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 estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer. 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 and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Hugh Hayden, Van Hanos, Cheyney Thompson, Cory Arcangel, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

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