

For immediate release

JOHN McCracken

Works from 1963–2011

September 10 – October 19, 2013

Opening reception: Tuesday, September 10, 6 – 8 PM



From left to right: *Think Pink* (1967), *Theta-Two* (1965),
Untitled (1967)

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My tendency is to reduce or develop everything to "single things;" things which refer to nothing outside, but which at the same time possibly refer, or relate, to everything.

–John McCracken

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of works by John McCracken (1934–2011), on view at the gallery's 537 West 20th Street location in New York. Drawn primarily from public and private collections, the approximately fifty works in this exhibition chart the evolution of McCracken's diverse but considered oeuvre. Encompassing both well-known and lesser-seen examples of the artist's production from the early 1960s up through his death in 2011, the exhibition includes a range of the artist's sculptures as well as a number of his paintings and sketches in an effort to fully contextualize and demonstrate the breadth of his practice.

McCracken occupies a singular position within the recent history of American art, as his work melds the restrained formal qualities of Minimalist sculpture with a distinctly West Coast sensibility expressed through color, form, and finish. He developed his early sculptural work while studying painting at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland in the late 1950s and early 1960s. While experimenting with

increasingly three-dimensional canvases, the artist began to produce objects made with industrial materials, including plywood, sprayed lacquer, and pigmented resin, creating the highly reflective, smooth surfaces that he was to become known for.

The exhibition imparts upon the viewer a diverse compendium of forms and tendencies, exploring in particular the idea of spatiality in McCracken's practice and his work's ever-shifting relationship to both architecture and the body of the viewer. Highlights from the exhibition include a room-size installation of six monumentally scaled black columns, a layout introduced by the artist in his sketchbook in the early 1970s, but first produced and shown at David Zwirner in 2006; as well as an adjacent room containing stainless steel sculptures from 2011, which are polished to produce such a high degree of reflectivity that they seem translucent and camouflaged, bordering on invisibility as they reflect their surroundings.

A number of works from the 1960s, when McCracken first emerged onto the Los Angeles art scene, are included in the exhibition, such as *Untitled* (1964), a cross-shaped hybrid form that vacillates between painting and sculpture; three multi-colored rectangular "slot" works, a form that McCracken first exhibited in his seminal 1965 solo show at Nicholas Wilder Gallery in Los Angeles; as well as several of the artist's earliest "planks," his signature sculptural form that he first generated in 1966 and continued to make throughout his career. These narrow monochromatic, rectangular board-shaped sculptures lean against the wall while simultaneously entering into the three-dimensional realm of the viewer. Also on view is *Untitled* (2011), the last plank that McCracken made in his lifetime, which is fabricated in stainless steel.

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By contrast, works such as *Minnesota* (1989), *Red Element (RA)* (1991), and *Nightbird* (1992) demonstrate the type of irregularly shaped and multi-surfaced structures that preoccupied McCracken in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The second floor galleries will house an installation of McCracken's small gem-like pedestal sculptures in various rectangular and triangular formats from the late 1960s and early 1970s, which occupied a prominent position in the artist's 1986 mid-career survey at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, in addition to a selection of rarely exhibited "mandala" paintings and sketchbook drawings.

On the occasion of the exhibition, the gallery will publish a comprehensive monograph, which will include new scholarship by art historian Robin Clark.

John McCracken was born in 1934 in Berkeley, California. Beginning in the 1960s, he exhibited steadily in the United States and abroad, and his early work was included in groundbreaking exhibitions such as *Primary Structures* at the Jewish Museum, New York (1966) and *American Sculpture of the Sixties* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1967). In 1986, the major survey *Heroic Stance: The Sculpture of John McCracken 1965–1986* was organized by P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, New York, and traveled to the Newport Harbor Art Museum (now the Orange County Museum of Art), Newport Beach, California; Fine Arts Gallery, University of California, Irvine; and the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Texas. In 2011, his work was the subject of a large-scale retrospective at Castello di Rivoli, Turin. Other significant solo shows include the Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (2009); Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent (2004); Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna; and the Kunsthalle Basel (both 1995).

McCracken's work has been prominently featured in major group exhibitions worldwide, most recently in three shows organized as part of the 2011 region-wide initiative *Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980* at the Getty Center, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, La Jolla, California; and Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, California. Other group exhibitions include *Time & Place: Los Angeles 1957-1968*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2008); *documenta 12*, Kassel, Germany (2007); *The Los Angeles Art Scene, 1955-1985*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2006); and *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958-1968*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2004).

Work by the artist is held in prominent international collections, including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; The Art Institute of Chicago; Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; Musée d'art moderne et contemporain (MAMCO), Geneva; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, California; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

In 2015, the Orange County Museum of Art in Newport Beach, California will host a retrospective of McCracken's work.

Upcoming Event: Exhibition Walkthrough with Robin Clark

Wednesday, September 11, 6:30 PM

Robin Clark will lead a guided tour of the exhibition. Clark is an art historian and curator focused on intersections of contemporary art and architecture. Her recent exhibitions and publications include *Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface* (part of the Getty Foundation's *Pacific Standard Time* initiative) and *Automatic Cities: The Architectural Imaginary in Contemporary Art*, both at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego.

Space is limited. To RSVP, contact Emily Kamen at +1 212 517 8677 emily@davidzwirner.com

For press inquiries, please contact

Kim Donica at David Zwirner +1 212 727 2070 kim@davidzwirner.com