

METRO PICTURES

SPUTTERANCES

Organized by Sanya Kantarovsky

March 17 - April 22, 2017

Milton Avery, Charles Burchfield, Mathew Cerletty, Leidy Churchman, René Daniëls, Raoul De Keyser, Denzil Forrester, Karlo Kacharava, Allison Katz, Maria Lassnig, Jacob Lawrence, Jonas Lipps, Ryan McLaughlin, Monique Mouton, Jeanette Mundt, Paulina Olowska, Walter Swennen, Bob Thompson, Charline von Heyl, Amelie von Wulffen, Marcus Weber, and a contribution by Ben Lerner.

In response to his appreciation of and heightened attention to the work of René Daniëls, Metro Pictures invited Sanya Kantarovsky to curate this special exhibition. Titled *Sputterances*, it shares its name with a poem by Daniëls, whose enigmatic and influential work serves as the exhibition's point of departure. In Daniëls's terms a sputterance is a sum of two opposing actions—a sputter and an utterance. This witty semantic paradigm effectively captures the ethos of Daniëls's practice, which serves as a rough guideline for Kantarovsky's arrangement of the exhibition. Three works by Daniëls punctuate the show, the last of which is inscribed with the title "the most contemporary picture show" on its outer edge. As if proposing an alternative title to the show as a whole, the small work offers a self-reflective closure in the last room of the exhibition.

Daniëls's paintings range from language-driven anecdotes to surprisingly earnest reveries in color, shape and value. Drawing on this range within Daniëls's work, the exhibition proposes an expanded view of highly individual painting practices with parallel themes and considerations. The paintings in *Sputterances* find their resonance in the gap between the impulse to express—to utter—and the unanticipated obstacles—sputters—whose confluence results in a finished painting. Unlike procedures that elicit predetermined outcomes, the criteria to arrive at the completion of these distinctive works are inexplicable.

Milton Avery's *Mother's Boy* depicts a grotesquely large boy painted in warm hues, straddling his delicate, chromatically cooler mother, who seems to buckle under his weight. The Belgian artist Walter Swennen's *Wind Blue* is a cerulean rectangle impressed with fluttering, wind-swept charcoal marks, doubling as a murky color field and a coy pun. Darker anxieties emerge in Bob Thompson's homage to Goya, *The Struggle*, which represents a human body pulled apart by devilish figures for an insatiable audience. In Denzil Forrester's *From Trenchtown to Porthtown* jovial beachgoers lounge irreverently as a man is arrested by police. Amelie von Wulffen's untitled 2016 painting, meanwhile, conjures an oneiric moonlit interior populated by oversized praying mantises, with faces appearing like ghostly reflections on a wooden floor.

The paintings in the exhibition rely on the incongruent double-take, demanding a slow, investigative way of looking and reading. In contrast to today's frenetic visual culture of instant recognition, *Sputterances* effectively delays our visual consumption to accommodate complicated humor, misfires and strange frequencies. The works are relentlessly inventive and satisfying as they trace an ever-elusive boundary between doubt and conviction.

Kantarovsky invited writer Ben Lerner to compose a poem on the occasion of the exhibition. Marina Ancona at 10 Grand Press printed a letterpress broadside of the poem that is available to take away at the entrance.



Milton Avery, *Mother's Boy*, 1944, oil on canvas.