

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Walter Swennen

bewtie

515 West 24th Street

September 15 – October 28, 2017

Opening September 14, 6-8pm

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to present *bewtie*, an exhibition of new paintings by Belgian artist Walter Swennen. The artist's second show with the gallery expands Swennen's deeply personal approach to the medium and practice of painting. During his acclaimed, nearly 40-year career, Swennen has worked without one signature style to categorize his artistic oeuvre. Rather, he employs his background in philosophy, poetry and psychoanalysis to create works that are defined by the absence of a single perspective or framework.

Language plays a crucial role in Swennen's work, tied closely to the artist's own history. At a young age, his family stopped speaking his mother tongue of Flemish and began to speak French. After several years, he was unable to speak or understand Flemish, complicating his understanding of how language could be used as an effective form of communication between people. Letters, fragments and statements in English, Flemish and French often infiltrate his canvases, both providing or removing any sense of narrative or context. In this multidisciplinary approach, Swennen mines his memory to source imagery from history and popular culture to examine the lyrical possibilities of painting that prioritize gesture, texture and technique over subject matter. Melding images from his mind with motifs and subjects appropriated from comic strips, advertisements and children's drawings, Swennen's figuration is as an act of rebellion and deviation that blurs the lines between humor and gravitas, the political and the formal as well as reality and fiction.

From September 9 through October 21, White Columns will present a selection of older works by Swennen, alongside a collaborative film made with Jacques Charlier for the Paris Biennial in 1971. On September 16, White Columns will host a screening of the 2016 Walter Swennen documentary "The Crimson Tongue," directed by Violaine de Villiers, followed by a Q & A with the artist.

Walter Swennen was born in 1946 in Brussels, where he presently lives and works. His work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at international institutions including Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf; Culturgest Lisbon; Kunstverein Freiburg; MUKHA Antwerp; Kunsthal Rotterdam; and WIELS contemporary art center, Brussels. Swennen has also been included in notable group exhibitions including: Atopolis, Manège de Sury, Mons (2015); The Importance of Being..., Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana (2015); Idiolect, Arentshuis, Bruges (2009); La Belgique Visionnaire/Visionair België curated by Harald Szeemann (Palais des Beaux-Arts/Palais voor Schone Kunsten, Brussels, 2005); Voir en Peinture (FRAC Ile de France/Le Plateau, Paris, 2003); La Consolation (Centre d'Art National Contemporain, Le Magasin, Grenoble, 1999) and Trouble Spot. Painting (Antwerp, 1999).

Rosemarie Trockel
Plus Quam Perfekt
130 East 64th Street

September 13 – October 28, 2017

Mel Bochner
Language Is Not Transparent
12 Rue du Grand Cerf

September 7 – November 10, 2017

For further information, please contact Andrew Huff: ahuff@gladstonegallery.com

New York gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–6pm

Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm and Saturday, 12pm–6pm