

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEL BOCHNER: EXASPERATIONS



5 JUNE – 13 JULY 2019

PRIVATE VIEW: TUESDAY, 4 JUNE, 6 – 8 PM

Simon Lee Gallery is proud to present an exhibition of new paintings on velvet by American artist Mel Bochner. This is the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

For nearly 60 years Bochner's intellectual and material analysis of painting, photography and sculpture has yielded ground-breaking works that explore the intersection of linguistic and visual representation. As a leading figure within the conceptual and post-minimal art movements of the 1960s, he experimented in complicating the relationship between image and language. Bochner's father was a sign-painter by trade and so from an early age the artist developed an interest in the function of painting and its potential as a method of linguistic communication. Words and language as both subject and medium form the backbone of a practice fundamentally concerned with a continual oscillation between the verbal and the visual. In recent years his conceptual practice has developed in tandem with a lush, painterly practice that investigates the interrelation of form and meaning in the visual manifestation of language. With his word paintings Bochner explores the cognitive links between looking at and reading a painting.

This new series of Bochner's word paintings marks a radical departure for the artist. His inclusion in the 2018 Carnegie International gave rise to a new body of work that combined his signature textual interventions with a largely monochrome palette. Installed throughout the museum in often-unexpected locations the site-specific series accosted visitors with idiomatic, sometimes caustic, expressions from Bochner's personal phrase dictionary, including 'Do I have to draw you a picture?', 'I've had it up to here' and 'Are you out of your fucking mind?' Repetition plays a major role in his work, and he often revisits the same words and phrases. In the 2019 works, Bochner explores the lexicon of the Carnegie International paintings but in a riot of colour, discarding his own strict formal protocol in favour of a liberated approach to form, colour and meaning that more closely resembles his studio painting practice. Each letter oozes with pigment, drips and smudges escaping the crisp edges of the typeface thereby emphasising the material expression of their own execution. Meaning is both enhanced and obscured by Bochner's technique, which invites the viewer to re-consider the ways in which we interpret language and image.

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NOTES TO EDITORS**About Mel Bochner**

Mel Bochner was born in Pittsburgh, PA in 1940 and lives and works in New York, NY. He received a BFA degree with a major in painting and a minor in philosophy from the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, PA in 1962. He taught aesthetics, art history and sculpture at the School of Visual Arts, New York, NY from 1965-1972 and in 2001 he was the Adjunct Professor at Yale University, New Haven, CT. His first one-man exhibition was held at the School of Visual Arts Gallery, New York, NY in 1966. In 2018 he participated in the 57th Edition of the Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, PA. His work has been the subject of many solo museum exhibitions, most recently, *Amazing! Mel Bochner Prints from the Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer and his Family Foundation*, Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OH (2018); *Mel Bochner: Illustrating Philosophy*, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley, MA (2015); *Mel Bochner: Strong Language*, Jewish Museum, New York, NY (2014); *Mel Bochner: If the Colour Changes*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK (2012), which travelled to Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2013) and Fundação de Serralves, Porto, Portugal (2013) and *In the Tower: Mel Bochner*, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (2011). His work is included in major public and private collections internationally, including Tate, London, UK; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montreal, Canada; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, NY; National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles, CA and Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA.

About Simon Lee Gallery

Founded in Mayfair, London in 2002, Simon Lee Gallery represents artists of diverse generations whose practices range from sculpture and painting to video and photography and who share a broad interest in an exploration of the conceptual. Aiming to provide a significant international audience for its artists, the gallery also regularly punctuates its programme with historical exhibitions and curated group shows, which present shifts in contemporary art practice and thought, whilst broadening the dialogue with artists outside of the gallery's core programme. In addition to its UK activity, in 2012 the gallery opened a space in Hong Kong, helping to introduce its artists to a wider public in Asia, with a fully independent programme. In 2014, Simon Lee Gallery opened an office and private viewing space in New York. In 2017, this space was re-launched with an independent year-round programme of exhibitions and events, showcasing the work of emerging and established artists in dynamic group and solo exhibitions.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter: @SimonLeeGallery
www.simonleegallery.com

Image: Mel Bochner, *Blah, Blah, Blah, / Look Who's Talking*, 2019, Oil on velvet, 152.4 x 228.6 cm (60 x 90 in.) in 2 parts

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