

bernard jacobson gallery

Bruce McLean

Action Sculpture Potato Painting

31st May – 29th June 2014

Bernard Jacobson Gallery is thrilled to announce the opening of Bruce McLean's new exhibition 'Action Sculpture Potato Painting', a collection of new works by the Scottish sculptor, performance artist, filmmaker and painter. The exhibition will run in conjunction with 'Bruce McLean – Another condition of sculpture' at Leeds Art Gallery. Both exhibitions seek to bring together the artist's paintings, drawings, ceramics, collage and various mixed media works from the 1960s to the present day to highlight his continuously lively, witty and profound inquiry into sculpture and its representation.

McLean studied at Glasgow School of Art from 1961 to 1963, and from 1963 to 1966 at St Martin's School of Art, London, where he and others rebelled against what appeared to be the formalist academicism of his teachers, including Anthony Caro and Phillip King. In 1965 he abandoned conventional studio production in favour of impermanent sculptures using materials such as water, along with performances of a generally satirical nature directed against the art world. In *Pose Work for Plinths I* (1971; London, Tate), a photographic documentation of one such performance, he used his own body to parody the poses of Henry Moore's celebrated reclining figures. When in 1972 he was offered an exhibition at the Tate Gallery, he opted for a 'retrospective' he titled "King For a Day" which lasted only one day. From the mid 1970s, while continuing to mount occasional performances, McLean has turned increasingly to painting/sculpture and film work and in 1985 he won the John Moores Painting Prize.

In his new painting McLean depicts ovoid shapes, which become the subject of the work. The grey round forms are theatrically lit and occupy the centre of the canvas. As the title of the exhibition suggests, these forms may or may not be perfectly peeled and faceted potatoes. 'Action Sculpture Potato Painting' will also feature a large-scale painting by the artist, which is inspired by Gustave Courbet's *The Artist's Studio; a real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life* (1854-5). In Courbet's painting we see the artist at work in his studio, gazed upon by dogs, musicians, academics and even his model. McLean's experimentation with depicting sculpture in a studio setting -as with his work featured in our 2012 exhibition 'Bruce McLean: The Shapes of Sculpture' - is here revisited. In McLean's recent work we see

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overlapping paintings, canvases, studio equipment and objects, which look as if they may be sculptural works of art, but are often cardboard cut-out replicas. It is this playful ambiguity, which runs as a theme through McLean's body of work.

Gustave Courbet's *The Artist's Studio; a real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life* (1854-5) is also the subject of McLean's latest series of collages. Monochrome copies of Courbet's original work are written on with the artist's notes, large sections of the studio scene are blocked in with primary coloured paper and new hand drawn figures are introduced to the studio scene. The collages draw attention to small sections of Courbet's work, focusing on figures and exploring their interaction. It is this dynamism in the overlapping of forms and text, which often gives new and humorous meaning to the work, which is characteristic of McLean's collages. Courbet's painting is the basis of 'The Changing Room: An Opera' by Sam Belinfante, Bruce McLean and Lawrence Preece'. Here McLean uses the medium of chamber opera to challenge and explore the artwork. Besides his paintings and collages the exhibition will also feature two glass vases by McLean-cast from a sculpture made in 1958.

Notes to Editors: The Bernard Jacobson Gallery was founded in 1969 and is a major dealer specializing in modern and contemporary British and international art. Situated in the central London district of Mayfair the gallery has two main exhibition spaces and a graphics department all within 6 Cork Street. In March 2011 Bernard Jacobson Gallery opened a new space in New York at 17 East 71st Street, NY 10021. The gallery also has a strong presence at major international art fairs, participating at Art Hong Kong, London's Pavilion of Art and Design, and the prestigious Art Basel.