

Mel Bochner: *DO I HAVE TO DRAW YOU A PICTURE?*

January 15 - February 26, 2022



Marc Selwyn Fine Art is pleased to announce an exhibition of recent paintings by Mel Bochner.

One of the preeminent figures in the history of conceptual art, Bochner has used verbal, mathematical and geometric systems to motivate the content of his work since the mid-1960s. This exhibition continues his exploration of language in painting, and painting as a language.

In these recent oil on velvet works, Bochner uses an embossing technique to build up a rich and variegated surface. Viscous letters spell out an array of synonyms and phrases, from the polite to the perverse, on a porous velvet support which allows paint to absorb and saturate in unpredictable ways. The colorful, complex surfaces surrounding his texts emphasize the ambiguity and tenuous nature of verbal communication. As the mind goes back and forth between reading the texts and experiencing them as color and shape, language loses its authority, literally melting before the viewer's eyes.

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In three of the works, Bochner chooses short, ironic phrases, such as “*Talk Is Cheap*” and “*It Is What It Is,*” which on a broader level reflect the current cacophonous and cynical state of political discourse in the United States. The exhibition is enhanced by *Street Sign*, 2021, a VMS (Variable Message

Sign) to be installed along Santa Monica Boulevard, which appears to have been coopted by the artist as it displays phrases from the exhibition, and creates an unexpected disruption to everyday life.

Mel Bochner (born 1940) received his BFA from Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1962 and received an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts in 2005. He has exhibited throughout the United States and Europe and his work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Tate Modern, London; and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, among others. Recent solo museum exhibitions include The Jewish Museum (New York, 2014), Museu Serralves (Porto, 2013), Haus der Kunst (Munich, 2012), and the National Gallery of Art (Washington, 2011). In 2018, Bochner was included in the Carnegie International, 57th Edition, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. Bochner lives and works in New York City.