

MEL BOCHNER



Language is not transparent, 1970-2024. Acrylic and oil pastel on wall. 182.88 x 121.92 cm.

Blanca de Navarra 7 y 9 | Madrid

March 1, 2024 - April 26, 2024

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"For me there is a big difference between admiring something and reading something."

- Mel Bochner

Cayón Madrid is pleased to announce the first solo exhibition dedicated to the work of American artist Mel Bochner (Pittsburgh, USA, 1940).

At a time when traditional compositional resources were beginning to be questioned, Bochner -along with Eva Hesse, Donald Judd or Robert Smithson-, became one of the first artists to take the way of understanding the visual arts a step further, moving towards an intrinsic observation of reality through language, physical space and color as a form of illogical representation. The fusion of these three elements now shapes our understanding of the world.

Bochner, unlike the other artists mentioned above, has investigated the conventions of painting and language, coming to the conclusion that language is not transparent: it is opaque or translucent. What happens when Bochner repeats a message over time is that he pushes the previous sentence from relative transparency (to make the message clearer) to relative opacity (for the opposite). All the repetition of words impedes their clarity, so it is in Bochner's work: the words are always legible, but not always clear as he stamps words and phrases at various overlapping angles. After all, what do you do when you send a message to someone and you don't think they get it? You repeat it, and if they still don't get it, you repeat it again. In this way you go on to create what are known as apparent synonyms - which in the end logically turn out not to be synonyms.

His pioneering introduction of the use of language in the visual led Harvard University art historian Benjamin Buchloh to describe his 1966 Working Drawings as "probably the first truly conceptual exhibition."

This exhibition reflects in a unique way her need to use a variety of approaches as a means of expression and creativity, inviting viewers to delve deeper into her artistic journey. In this way, without being fully conscious, the language goes from talking about art to becoming part of the art itself.

Thus, the exhibition is composed of one of his most important installations Language is not transparent, painted directly on the wall (shown for the first time in Spain and made from 1970) and 9 works on velvet, a support on which the artist has worked in recent years and that allows him to obtain qualities and an extremely delicate and subtle appearance, where the background is accidentally intermingled with the letters that make up the work.

Bochner's works based on written language have been exhibited over the last few years in various solo exhibitions at different museums, including The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, 2006; The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 2011; Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2013; Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Serralves, Porto, Portugal, 2013; The Jewish Museum, New York, 2014 or The National Museum of Art, Osaka, 2023.

To request images of the works and other information, please contact:

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