

BEN BROWN

- Press Release for immediate release -

5th July – 22nd September 2006

Preview 4th July 2006 6 – 8:30 pm

Ben Brown Fine Arts is pleased to announce Motion on Paper.

This exhibition is the first of its kind at Ben Brown Fine Arts on Cork Street. It assembles works on paper by a wide range of modern and contemporary artists. Drawings by famous and well-established figures such as Lucio Fontana, Lucian Freud and Andy Warhol are hung with sheets by younger and upcoming draftsmen like Aleksandra Mir, Peter Macdonald and Margarita Gluzberg. The title Motion on Paper reflects the show's focus on the handling of media and its varying effects in drawings.

The theme dates back to the Renaissance when a new freedom of expression arose from the increasing availability of paper and the replacement of the stylus (a drawing instrument with a metal point) with more flexible mediums, such as pen and ink or chalk. Compositions became more instinctive and less formulaic, and paper was regarded as a surface for invention, experimentation, and improvisation. The pivotal figure in this transition was Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), whose writings and drawings evidence his intense involvement with the creative act and his primary role in the invention of the sketch. Drawing was a spontaneous act for Leonardo, one which traced the movements of his mind on paper and set a precedent for draftsmen to come. In the words of the master, "the sketching out of the narratives should be rapid, and the arrangement of the limbs not too defined but merely confined to suggesting their disposition." [Treatise on Painting, about 1492]. After the sketch united drawing with the art of thinking on paper, artists increasingly exploited the tantalizing spatiality of the page.

Draughtsmanship is the one artistic field in which there remains a strong link between old and new, in terms of the motivations of draftsmen as well as the techniques and surfaces used. At Ben Brown Fine Arts, the viewer is invited to observe the special qualities of drawings that continue to develop and evolve today. Particular attention is paid to the trace of the artist's hand across the surface of the paper. Motion in terms of the movement of the hand is identified for instance in Lucio Fontana's *Naufraggio* of 1946. Here, loose ink lines describe a flow of nude figures. The drawing acts as a 'behind-the-scenes' view of a master typically associated with abstract painting. Like handwriting, the signature style and stroke of artists is revealed most effectively in their drawings. The line can be pure and minimal as in Andy Warhol's *Drawing for Boy Book* of 1956, soft and wiry as in Neil Tait's *Untitled* of 2005, or bold and self-assured as in Tony Bevan's recent series of heads. In the words of Marlene Dumas, also represented in the show, "whatever else my drawings speak about, they are about the vitality of gesture, speed and action" [Vitamin D, New Perspectives in Drawing, 2005, p.82].

Motion is also examined in terms of subject matter. Drawings by sculptors are particularly revealing in their search to render three-dimensional material on a flat surface. Tony Cragg's fluid compositions challenge the static quality of the page. Anish Kapoor's sheets draw the viewer in and out of his vacuous spaces, just as his sculptures do. Rachel Whiteread's forms move fluently across the paper.

Drawings are often indelible and unchangeable. Despite this unforgiving nature, many artists today have adopted draughtsmanship as their main medium of expression. Sigmar Polke experiments with the transparency and opacity of pigments on paper. Francesco Clemente exploits the evocative qualities of watercolour. Julie Mehretu's architectural creations adapt well to the lightness of pencil on unprepared paper.

Artists represented at Ben Brown Fine Arts are (in alphabetical order) Haluk Akakce, Kate Atkin, David Austen, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Joseph Beuys, Tony Bevan, Louise Bourgeois, Giuseppe Caccavalle, George Condo, Anne Chu, Francesco Clemente, Tony Cragg, José Damasceno, John Davies, Richard Deacon, Alberto di Fabio, Tracey Emin, Inka Essenhigh, Lucio Fontana, Lucian Freud, Ewan Gibbs, Margarita Gluzberg, Antony Gormley, Philip Guston, Keith Haring, Damian Hirst, Gary Hume, Ilya Kabakov, Anish Kapoor, Michael Landy, Simon Ling, Peter Macdonald, Jason Martin, Henri Matisse, Julie Mehretu, Aleksandra Mir, Lucia Nogueira, Giuseppe Penone, Peter Peri, Pablo Picasso, Sigmar Polke, Pietro Ruffo, Clare Shenstone, Elisabeth Scherffig, Jose Maria Sicilia, David Smith, Mari Sunna, Neal Tait, Marco Tirelli, Keith Tyson, Lee Ufan, Bernar Venet, Andy Warhol, Richard White, Rachel Whiteread.

Allegra Pesenti is the curator of the show. She was Assistant Curator of Drawings at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and recently finished her PhD in Italian Renaissance drawings at the Courtauld Institute of Art. Her experience in the old master field is a thorough base for her recent venture into the world of contemporary draughtsmanship.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue.

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