

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS



GAVIN TURK: THE YEARS

26 APRIL – 14 JUNE 2013

Ben Brown Fine Arts presents a major solo exhibition of Gavin Turk's highly influential works to coincide with the long-awaited publication of the first monograph of the artist. Entitled *The Years*, to signify over two decades of remarkable output with deeper resonances throughout art history, the exhibition features a number of works that have never been shown before in the UK, as well as new pieces inspired by the distinct methods and styles of two 20th Century Italian masters: Lucio Fontana and Michelangelo Pistoletto.

Turk's artworks frequently bear his own name or image but also refer to the works of artists before him. He paradoxically began his career with a blue heritage plaque announcing his own demise and posthumous recognition, but his subsequent work has drawn on art-historical icons to play with the idea of various reincarnations. Among the most recognisable on display is *Triple Pop Black and White* (2011), a variant on Turk's famous waxwork *Pop* (1993), in which the artist portrays himself as Sid Vicious in the gunslinging pose of Warhol's 'Elvis'. In this latest work, Turk's appropriation of Warhol comes full circle with the use of the same silkscreen process. By contrast, *Oscar II* (2000), a curious bust of Turk with a shotgun nose and bulging eggs for eyes, draws on the figure in Magritte's *L'ellipse*.

Symbolising life, creation and originality, eggs recur in new works inspired by Fontana's *buchi* ('holes') and *tagli* ('slashes') series. Turk's ovoid canvases are punctured with painstaking precision to spell his initials, as part of his on-going exploration of process and authorship. Similarly, broken egg shells fixed to a canvas spell out Turk's signature in *One Thousand, Two Hundred and Thirty-Four Eggs* (1997). On the surface the work is a statement of artistic identity, but it also acknowledges its debt to Belgian Surrealist Marcel Broodthaers and the textured white canvasses of Manzoni's 'Achrome' paintings.

At the exhibition Turk will also premiere a new work inspired by the defining 'Mirror Paintings' Pistoletto began in the Sixties. *Pistoletto's Rubbish* (2013) cleverly fuses the highly polished surfaces associated with the Italian master with a silkscreened image of Turk's own iconic bin bag sculptures. This latest work adds another layer of illusion to the artist's subversion of the rules of commercial art. Turk pioneered a new British *trompe l'oeil* when he first began casting bronze sculptures that he then painted to look like ephemera or urban waste. While *Refuse* (2012) is an exquisitely detailed sculpture that resembles a bin bag, *Habitat (Zingy Purple)* (2004) and *Burnt Out* (2008) make provocative references to sleeping rough.

Over the past 25 years, Turk has solidified a reputation for challenging notions of value and the myth of artistic integrity. The exhibition at Ben Brown Fine Arts runs from 26 April to 14 June 2013 and surveys with acuity over two decades of influential and significant work. It will accompany a monograph of the artist published by Prestel on 26 April. Featuring numerous colour illustrations, this impressive volume includes Turk's major works since the early 1990s, an original essay by Iain Sinclair, contextualizing the artist's work under the umbrella of psycho-geography – including the impact of London on Turk's personae – and an introductory essay by Judith Collins.

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Gavin Turk was born 1967 in Guildford and went to the Royal College of Art in London. In his MA exhibition show, *Cave* (1991), he presented a whitewashed studio space containing only a blue heritage plaque commemorating his presence. Though refused a degree, his subsequent notoriety attracted the attention of Charles Saatchi and he became part of a loosely associated group known as the 'Young British Artists' (YBAs). He has since been represented by many major galleries throughout the world and is known for pioneering many forms of contemporary British sculpture now taken for granted, including the painted bronze, the waxwork, the recycled art-historical icon and the use of rubbish in art. He was recently commissioned to make several public sculptures including *Nail* (2011), a 12-metre sculpture next to St Paul's Cathedral in the City of London.

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