

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS



HOOLIGAN: NEW PAINTINGS BY SIMON BIRCH

11 April 2013 – 15 May 2013

Private View 10 April 2013, 6-8.30pm

Ben Brown Fine Arts is pleased to announce the inaugural show of Simon Birch, one of Hong Kong's most acclaimed contemporary artists, taking place at its gallery in Central Hong Kong's Pedder Building from 10 April to 16 May 2013.

Best-known for his dramatic figurative paintings, Birch has extended his exploration of the human figure in new works characterized by a distinctive use of textured oil on canvas. The striking female forms in *Hooligan* bear the imprint of an invisible force, as though someone hurled them through space and punched them into the frame. The belligerent title of the show is the only hint about the identity of the aggressor, underscoring the eruptive violence that pervades Birch's work. We're in a story that's been freeze-framed, but not for long: there is a before to this moment, just as there will be a hereafter.

The female subjects in *Hooligan* have an inner energy, imploding like stars around an atomic nucleus. There's a fusion at the core, blasting energy out, while gravity sucks it in. Birch's work is defined by this creative push-and-pull, a tension between intimate experience and public form, between a world off-frame and an embodied world inside, buried beneath the skin and decipherable only through signs and imprints rendered by the scar of the brush-stroke on canvas.

The body has been represented in radically different ways in Western and Chinese medical traditions. While the West emphasized anatomy, Chinese tradition stressed the body's sensory character. Birch's art engages with the implications of this divergence by imagining a body where anatomy and muscle coexist with the pulse of a life force, the invisible *qi*.

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Simon Birch is a UK-born artist who is a permanent resident of Hong Kong. He has had solo shows in Beijing, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Miami and Singapore, as well as exhibitions in group shows at the Hong Kong Museum of Art (2008), the Haunch of Venison, London, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (both 2011). Working within the medium of oil on canvas, Birch has also ventured into film and installation work, culminating in some particularly notable large-scale projects, including the 20,000 square feet multimedia installations *HOPE & GLORY: A Conceptual Circus* (2010) and *Daydreaming With...The Hong Kong Edition* (2012) at the ArtisTree, TaiKoo Place, Hong Kong. These large multimedia projects integrated paintings with film, installation, sculpture and performance housed in specifically configured spaces. Birch's work has been featured and reviewed in many international publications, including *Artforum*, *The Guardian*, *The International Herald Tribune* and *The New York Times*.

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