

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS



Tony Bevan (b. 1951), *Archive (PC142)*, 2014, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 157.5 x 142.2 cm. (62 1/8 x 56 in.)

TONY BEVAN

TREES AND ARCHIVES

26 NOVEMBER 2014 – 3 JANUARY 2015

PRIVATE VIEW TUESDAY 25 NOVEMBER, 6-8PM

This winter Ben Brown Fine Arts presents *Trees and Archives*, an exhibition unveiling fifteen new, large-scale works by British artist Tony Bevan. Bevan's distinctive graphic style and continued exploration of figurative and abstract representation have made him one of the UK's leading contemporary painters. This exhibition showcases the artist's investigations into his two most recent themes, trees and archives, together with a selection of his new self-portraits, accessing inchoate spaces and the innermost recesses of the mind.

Bevan's oeuvre is founded on the unpredictable quality of charcoal and the richness of his own pure acrylic pigments. By forcing charcoal into the pores of unstretched canvases on the floor of his Deptford studio, he creates splinters and shards that are locked in with the acrylic medium. Occasionally marking his canvases with a hand, foot, or item of clothing, Bevan's energetic physical involvement with his paintings is recorded in their texture.

Bevan's tree paintings, archives and self-portraits are motivated by the desire to explore hidden topographies.

Whilst travelling in China between 2007 and 2008, the artist came across an ancient tree in the courtyard of a temple in the district of Dujiangyan, Sichuan Province, and felt compelled to examine its internal forms. His responses to this tree reflect an appreciation of both its architectural potential and near-human element: dark strokes create a striking interplay between positive and negative space in this body of forms, whilst the wood's gnarled surface suggests scabbed human skin. The tree's ancestral associations are particularly striking in *Tree 11*, 2013, where flecks of orange and blue, recalling the primal palette of cave paintings, are juxtaposed with skeletal forms and limb-like branches.

In his self-portraits Bevan makes vigorous maps of the psyche, drawing thick charcoal lines over matrixes of veins and tendons. Inspired by the contorted physiognomic sculptures of Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, these works peel back the social face to reveal a more complex psychological state: in *Self-Portrait*, 2014, a head and neck are lacerated with black to create a disturbed facial landscape.

The Archives, Bevan's latest series, see the artist taking on infinite space. Inspired by Jorge Luis Borges' "The Library of Babel", a story depicting the universe as a library, these labyrinthine repositories of books allude to the vast spaces of the imagination. *Archive*, 2014, depicts a grid of bookshelves expanding to the edges of the canvas and beyond, invoking the surreal atmosphere of Borges' text. By resembling the characters of an unknown language in their repetition and striking graphic depiction, Bevan's books form a portentous meditation on contained knowledge.

**The artist will be in attendance at the Private View and is available for interviews.**



*Tree 11 (PC1311)*, 2013, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 165.7 x 206.4 cm. (65 1/4 x 81 1/4 in.); *Self Portrait (PC148)*, 2014, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 82 x 77 cm. (32 1/4 x 30 1/4 in.)

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Tony Bevan (b. 1951) studied at the Bradford School of Art (1968–71), Goldsmiths' College (1971–74) and the Slade School of Fine Art (1974–76). Since 1976, Bevan has exhibited widely, holding his first solo U.S. shows at Ronald Feldman Gallery in 1988 and L.A. Louver in 1989. Bevan has also exhibited at the ICA, London, (1987-88), Staatsgalerie Moderner Kunst Haus der Kunst, Munich (1989), Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (1993), and the Kunsthalle, Kiel (1988). A major retrospective was presented by the Institut Valencia d'Art Modern (IVAM) in Valencia, Spain (2005).

In March 2007, Tony Bevan was elected as a Royal Academician of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. His work is included in many prominent international collections such as the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, The National Portrait Gallery and the Tate Gallery, London.

### **BEN BROWN FINE ARTS**

Founded in 2004, Ben Brown Fine Arts is located on Brook's Mews in the heart of Mayfair. The gallery has prominently positioned itself on the contemporary art scene with the sole UK representation of artists such as Ron Arad, Miquel Barceló, Vik Muniz, François-Xavier and Claude Lorraine, Gavin Turk, Not Vital, Heinz Mack, and the Estate of Keith Haring. Also renowned for its strong expertise in 20th Century Italian Art, the gallery has been exhibiting the work of Lucio Fontana, Alighiero Boetti and Mimmo Rotella, amongst others, since its inception. In 2009 Ben Brown Fine Arts took their first step in an international expansion with the opening of an exhibition space in Hong Kong.

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