

FRIEZE MASTERS

Regent's Park
October 15–17, 2021
Preview 13 & 14

GALERIE **KORNFELD**

Presents

Works from the 1980s by

Bruce McLean

BOOTH G3



Bruce McLean is a Scottish sculptor, performance artist, filmmaker and painter. Considered as one of the major figures of contemporary British Art, having led the development of Conceptual art in Britain in the 1960s.

In 1965 he abandoned conventional studio production in favour of impermanent sculptures using materials such as water, along with performances of a generally satirical nature directed against the art world. Investigating the condition of sculpture and creatively interrogating, in an astonishing diversity of media, the nature of its validity, its diverse possibilities of meaning, its propositions and pretensions, its presentations, positionings and re-positionings, its private and public settings, indoor and outdoor, and its critical contexts.

McLean's practice continues to be in a permanent state of movement and invention; from the late 1960s his range of media has included painting, printmaking, sculpture, film, photography, drawing and live work. From the mid 1970s, while continuing to mount occasional performances, McLean turned increasingly to painting, sculpture and film work.

SPOTLIGHT PRESENTATION

Bruce McLean had concentrated on performance art and sculpture since 1965 and began painting again in the 80s. His paintings of that period had a colourist and punchy graphic sensibility using unmixed colours applied directly to the canvas.

McLean's early work aggressively deconstructed the assumptions upon which traditional art forms were based. Using humour in order to prompt the viewer to be more aware of the darker machinations of the art world. When McLean adopted painting as his primary medium, he continued to critique the establishment and his paintings became satires of the materialistic consumer culture of the 1980s and the fashion-oriented, social climbing, commercial expansion of the art market at the time. His body of work in the 80's, which we will focus on, and which are relatively overlooked in his oeuvre, takes a generalized view of human idiosyncrasy, aiming at the vacuous materialism of TV culture and its seduction by style and wealth.

Reintroducing painting on an epic, expressionist scale which brought on a theatrical shift from the cool minimalist and language-based art of the 70's, Bruce McLean was one of the key players in this radical Neo-Expressionist painting scene of the 80s. As figuration and expressionist painting continue to become the language of painting today amongst a younger generation of artists, it seems appropriate to reintroduce this body of works by Bruce Mclean at Frieze Masters Spotlight.





BIOGRAPHY

Bruce McLean (b.1944) lives and works in London. He studied at the Glasgow School of Art from 1961 to 1963, and from 1963 to 1966 at St. Martin's School of Art, London, where he and others rebelled against what appeared to be the formalist academicism of his teachers, including Anthony Caro and Phillip King.

He was given a one-day retrospective, *King for a Day*, 1972 at the Tate Gallery at the age of 27 and in 1985 was awarded the John Moores prize for painting. After St. Martin's McLean went on to teach at numerous art schools, including The Slade School of Fine Art, where he became Head of Graduate Painting (2002-2010). McLean's bold and confident approach to printmaking proved influential to his contemporaries and to a generation of younger artists.

Since retiring from his professorship of painting at the Slade School of Art, he has taken on a large studio in west London where he has been making increasingly large paintings and sculptural film works.

Bruce McLean's work has been included in seminal exhibitions such as 'When Attitudes Become Form' at Kunsthalle Bern, 1969; 'Zeitgeist' at Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin, 1982; and three instalments of documenta (1977, 1982 and 1987). In 2015 McLean was the subject of a major retrospective survey at Firstsite, Colchester curated by Michelle Cotton. In 2020 his paintings were featured in 'The Return of the Spirit in Painting' at Whitechapel Gallery, London.

