

BETTY CUNINGHAM GALLERY

PRESS RELEASE
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Philip Pearlstein Recent Paintings

Opening reception: Thursday, November 4, 6 – 8pm
On view through Saturday, December 18, 2010



I stare at the model. Each detail of the form as I transcribe it into paint fills my entire field of visual and mental experience. The final result in paint, of course, is controlled by the physicality of my effort to re-create the look of the forms in their space that is in front of me. And I never change the result to make the drawing academically correct. I trust my eyes. For me the process is an intensely interior experience of feeling rather than of analysis. It involves mesmerization, self-induced by staring, tuning the world out, emptying my mind. It really is a kind of high.

-Philip Pearlstein, catalogue excerpt, 2010

New York, NY – September 30, 2010 – Betty Cunningham Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Philip Pearlstein. The exhibition will include approximately ten paintings from the past two years. This will be the artist's fourth solo show in the space; he will be present for an opening reception on November 4. An illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition.

This most recent body of work continues Pearlstein's distinct approach to realism. Since 1960 he has studied and painted the oddly ever-changing shape of the nude model, focusing on the technical characteristics of painting the figure rather than creating a storyline. In a 2006 interview, Pearlstein discussed his interest in the figure:

I was strictly interested in the way ordinary people looked. And that became part of the kind of philosophy in a sense, to paint the ordinary, the everyday, not to go out of my way to make them tell some kind of story.

Around 1982 when he moved into a larger studio, the objects he had collected over the years entered into his view and resulted in more complex compositions. The collectibles ranged from toys to antiques, Americana-themed novelties to African art. Similar to his models, each object is one element of an overall abstract painting, which has characterized Pearlstein's canvases for decades. With all storyline removed,

the composition and technicality of the painting quickly become the subject. In 2001, Desiree Alvarez, an artist and long time model for Pearlstein, wrote:

The tension in his work comes from the fact that we are not accustomed to perceiving the body as a territory for abstraction. We want a painting of the body to be visceral because our experience of our bodies is visceral. Therefore, we do not bring the language of abstraction, and especially not geometric abstraction, to nude figure painting. Pearlstein's challenge is that we should.

His work can be seen in a host of prestigious collections, most notably: The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

Philip Pearlstein was born in Pittsburgh, PA in 1924. He received a BFA from Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1949 and an MA from NYU's Institute of Fine Arts in 1955. That same year he had his first solo show at Tanager Gallery. Throughout his career, he has held posts as teacher and critic at various institutions, including Pratt Institute, Yale University, and Brooklyn College. From 2003 – 2006, Pearlstein served as the President of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He lives and works in New York City.

For further information and/or images, please contact the gallery.

Image: "Model in Japanese Robe with African Carvings", 2009, Oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches

Next exhibition: Jake Berthot, January 6 – February 19, 2011

Betty Cuningham Gallery is located at 541 W 25th St. New York, NY 10001 T: 212.242.2772 F: 212.242.5959

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Hours: Tues – Sat, 10am – 6pm The gallery will be closed November 25 and December 24, 2010 – January 3, 2011.