

DOMINIQUE LÉVY

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DOMINIQUE LÉVY TO PRESENT SOLO EXHIBITION OF PAT STEIR'S WATERFALL PAINTINGS IN LONDON

Pat Steir

9 November 2016 – 28 January 2017

Dominique Lévy

22 Old Bond Street, London

Private view: 8 November, 6 – 8 PM



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London ... Dominique Lévy is pleased to present an exhibition of Pat Steir's paintings in London, marking the artist's first solo exhibition in the city in twenty-six years. A selection of works from 1990 to 2011 will be on view, including canvases from her celebrated Waterfall series.

The Waterfall paintings, which bridge the sensibilities of Conceptual art and Eastern philosophy, are contemplative investigations of space and chance. In this series, which the artist began in the 1980s and continues to produce today, Steir explores the technical possibilities available in paint, pouring and flinging it onto the canvas. This technique constituted an influential breakthrough in her style. To make the Waterfall paintings, Steir

first applies oil pigment to canvases using thick brushes and slow, methodical strokes, sometimes working from a ladder. Her gestures are made with varying degrees of force, yielding marks that range from opaque and deliberate to thin, film-like traces. This method gives rise to shimmering mists and light washes of paint in some areas and powerful downward cascades in others. The Waterfall canvases appear dimensional and expansive due to their complex, multilayered palettes and dramatic colour combinations.

Synthesizing gesture with natural referent, Steir's Waterfalls demonstrate her ongoing investigation into the relationship between material and image. The line, the foundational creative mark, has a strong physical dimension in her practice. In the Waterfall canvases, Steir's line is connected intentionally and reflexively to her movement. In this way, Steir questions the very possibility of abstraction: 'It seems to me, when you put down a line, there is a line. How could that line be abstract? No matter what else it represents it is always still a line.' Thus, in the Waterfall works, the line *is* a line, and the waterfall *is* a waterfall, rendered by actual cascades of paint.

About the Artist

Born in Newark, New Jersey in 1940, Pat Steir studied art and philosophy at Boston University and received her BFA from the Pratt Institute in 1962. In 1963, she was invited to participate in her first group show at the High Museum in Atlanta. The next year, her work appeared in group shows at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and in the Museum of Modern Art's *Drawing* exhibition, establishing her as a key figure among the first wave of women artists to gain prominence in the New York art world.

In the mid-1960s, Steir was appointed Art Director at Harper and Row Publishing Company in New York. In the early 1970s she taught art at Parsons School of Design, Princeton University, and later at the California Institute of the Arts where Ross Bleckner, David Salle, and Amy Sillman were among her students. She is a founding board member of Printed Matter, *HERESIES: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics*, and Semiotext(e).

Steir was lauded in the early 1970s for her canvases featuring various iconographic symbols crossed out with 'X' figures. Most prominently among these symbols were roses, inspired by Shakespeare's famous aphorism, 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet' and Gertrude Stein's retort, 'A rose is a rose is a rose'. Of this act of effacement, the artist explains, 'I wanted to destroy images as symbols. To make the image a symbol for a symbol. I had to act it out—make the image and cross it out.' While Steir had an affinity with Sol LeWitt and John Cage, she was compelled to find her own praxis, both painterly and theoretical. The influences of Conceptual art, French philosophy, and East Asian art and philosophy moved her to begin creating room-size installations in the mid-1970s. Steir is interested in working with 'space of any kind—interior space, heart space, movement in space, events in space, mind space, and imaginary space.' She has continued to explore these issues over the course of her five-decade career.

In the late 1970s, Steir travelled throughout the United States and lived in Europe, where numerous galleries regularly presented her work. Since then, Steir has had an extensive exhibition history with American and European museums, and has presented her work in hundreds of solo and group exhibitions worldwide. Most recently, *Drawing Out of Line*

travelled from the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, to the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York in 2010. In 2000, *Watershed* travelled to the Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, and the Des Moines Art Center, among other venues. In 1998 Steir created the site-specific installations *Likity Split* and *Ghost Moon Mountain Water* for the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, respectively.

Other major exhibitions include: the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (1996, 1994); Centre National d'art Contemporain de Grenoble (1992); and Musée d'art Contemporain, Lyon (1990). In 1988, *Pat Steir Prints 1976-1988* opened at the Cabinet des Estampes, Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva, and travelled to the Tate Gallery, London. The prior year, the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam presented *Paintings 1981-1984*; the Baltimore Museum of Art hosted *Drawing Now: Pat Steir*; and Kunstmuseum Bern opened *Paintings and Drawings*. In 1984, the Brooklyn Museum organised *Pat Steir: The Brueghel Series (A Vanitas of Style)*, which travelled to the Dallas Museum of Art; Centre d'art contemporain, Palais Wilson, Geneva; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA); the Des Moines Art Center; and the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague, among other venues. *Form Illusion Myth: The Prints and Drawings of Pat Steir* opened at the Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence, in 1983 and travelled to the California State University, Long Beach; the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; the Wellesley College Museum; and the Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis.

Her paintings, drawings, prints, and installations are held in the permanent collections of major international museums including: Denver Art Museum; Fondation Cartier, Paris; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; the Louvre, Paris; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Tate Gallery, London, among other institutions.

In addition to lecturing at museums and universities, Steir has been the recipient of several major awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship (1982) and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (1976, 1973). In 1991, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Art from the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY, and, in 2001, she received the Boston University School for the Arts Distinguished Alumni Award.