

Pearl Lam Galleries

Hong Kong Pedder Building

Raw Intent:

Antony Micallef solo exhibition



ANTONY MICALLEF b. 1975, **Raw Intent No. 1**, 2016, Oil with beeswax on French linen, 135 x 112 cm (53 1/8 x 44 in.)

Exhibition Dates 13 May–30 June, 2016 Monday–Saturday, 10am–7pm
Venue Pearl Lam Galleries Hong Kong Pedder Building
6/F, Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

Hong Kong—Pearl Lam Galleries is delighted to present the first solo exhibition in Asia of works by British artist Antony Micallef (b. 1975) at its Hong Kong Pedder Building space. The artist will exhibit a new series of paintings and studies that explore the relationships of the mechanics of artistic intent, representation, and the use of paint as a material for expressing emotions.

Known for his visually charged figure paintings, Micallef has enjoyed international success since he placed second in the BP Portrait Award 2000, hosted at the National Portrait Gallery in London. Other key exhibitions include at the National Academy of Fine Arts, Sofia, Bulgaria; the National Museum in Warsaw, Poland; The Royal Academy, London, UK; the ICA, London, UK; Tate Britain, London, UK; and Dallas Contemporary, Texas, USA.

Micallef's new series of works are a complete departure from his earlier artworks. He builds up a relief-like surface with heavy paint to depict a figurative mass in front of a muted background. By using an impasto technique, the material is pushed to its extreme and blurs our reading of painting and sculpture. Confronted with the sheer physicality of the painting as an object, the depicted subject takes on its own life and existence. Furthermore, the use of gestural abstraction resonates with the traditions of action painting from the 1940s and the School of London from the 1970s.

The title of the exhibition, *Raw Intent*, refers to a seemingly unmediated yet highly conscious process of manipulating the material during the act of painting. By presenting an unidentifiable figure in the painting, the artist intends to trigger the audience's sympathy. Micallef states his intention:

I am interested in that space where the figure almost disintegrates but somehow stays intact, leaving a sense of friction and raw distortion. The medium is celebrated and used in full force in many different ways with many different tools to render life that echoes traces of our emotional field.

Even though Micallef uses his reflection in a mirror as a starting point, he does not intend for his paintings to be read as portraits. The face becomes a conduit for exploring the hidden potential of the base material. The action of throwing paint mixes it in mid-air or when it impacts the actual surface. Given the weight and quantity of paint, this particular method of working is a laborious one; hauling the paint on a regular basis is an integral part of the work. Through the use of tools such as scrapers and palette knives, Micallef literally twists the paint to further distort the depicted figure in the hope of realising an embodiment that will "breathe" on its own.

The placement of artworks in this exhibition illustrates different stages of working with the figure, oscillating from a clear distinction between the figure and the background to the two being interwoven with one another. The audience goes through a metamorphosis. Emotions are captured via these "found" figures that undergo a perpetual fragmentation.

Raw Intent contemplates the very substance and void that makes us human in the first place. The real intent is to short-circuit our narcissism and provoke us to contemplate what makes a painting after all. Micallef's preoccupation is not to merely create imaginary subjects, but to capture an emotive moment that both the artist and the viewers can share. Micallef says, "Painting is like a snapshot, like a still of life. Life contained by it is still."

"We recently presented work by Antony Micallef at Art Basel in Hong Kong, where his work was well-received, and so we are delighted to open his first Asian solo show in Hong Kong. I believe that the visceral expressionism of his work will leave a lasting impact on audiences here."

—Pearl Lam, Founder of Pearl Lam Galleries

About Antony Micallef



Antony Micallef was born in Swindon, England in 1975 and graduated in Fine Arts from the University of Plymouth. He was notably taught by the austere landscape painter John Virtue, who was taught by the postwar painter Frank Auerbach.

Described as a modern Expressionist and widely recognised as one of the finest painters in contemporary art today, Micallef roots his work in social commentary and self-examination.

His major solo exhibitions include *Self* (2015), Lazarides Rathbone, London, UK; *Impure Idols* (2007), Lazarides, Hollywood, California, USA; *Antony Micallef* (2006), Eyestorm, Milan, Italy; and a show at the National Academy of Fine Arts, Sofia, Bulgaria (2005).

Antony Micallef in his London studio. Photography by Thomas Butler.

Micallef also has work in collections all over the world and has exhibited in group shows at institutions such as the Goss-Michael Foundation at Dallas Contemporary, Dallas, Texas, USA (2014); National Museum Warsaw, Poland (2013); ICA London (2012), Tate Britain (2010), Royal Academy, London (2008), and the National Portrait Gallery, London (2000). He took second prize in the BP Portrait Award competition in 2000.

About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience exhibiting Asian and Western art and design, it is one of the leading and most established contemporary art galleries to be launched out of China.

Playing a vital role in stimulating international dialogue on Chinese and Asian contemporary art, the Galleries is dedicated to championing artists who re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice from the region. The Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore collaborate with renowned curators, each presenting distinct programming from major solo exhibitions, special projects, and installations to conceptually rigorous group shows. Based on the philosophy of Chinese Literati where art forms have no hierarchy, Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines, with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

The four branches of Pearl Lam Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore represent an increasingly influential roster of contemporary artists. Chinese artists Zhu Jinshi and Su Xiaobai, who synthesise Chinese sensibilities with an international visual language, are presented internationally with work now included in major private and public collections worldwide. The Galleries has also introduced leading international artists, such as Jenny Holzer, Leonardo Drew, Carlos Rolón/Dzine and Yinka Shonibare MBE, to markets in the region, providing opportunities for new audiences in Asia to encounter their work. Pearl Lam Galleries encourages international artists to create new work which engages specifically with the region, collaborating to produce thought-provoking, culturally relevant work.

Press Enquiries

Eleanor Porter / SUTTON
eleanor@suttonpr.com / +852 2528 0792

Amelie Jiang / Pearl Lam Galleries
amelie@pearllamgalleries.com / +852 2522 1428