

MORE THAN WORDS



OPERA GALLERY

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16 - 30 OCTOBER 2019

OPERA GALLERY

PREFACE

In recent years, Opera Gallery Dubai has presented a wide array of solo and group exhibitions featuring a diverse range of themes, form and content. We are proud to open our season with a carefully curated selection of artists, who express their unique vision using some of the most fundamental symbols universally known to man.

With 'More than Words', we invite collectors to discover a range of artworks featuring the use of text. Each of the works on display projects the artist's message, often simply yet emphatically, with potent use of these ubiquitous and elementary forms.

Mel Bochner and Ben both use legible letters, arranged in either random or cohesive sentences, projecting a strong message, demanding the viewer's response.

The intimate messages emblazoned in bright neon from Tracey Emin bridge the gap between technique and content, empowering through an unguarded openness.

Alessandro Algardi, through his intricate yet minimalist works, blurs the line between content and composition, where the viewer has to make a choice between attempting to decipher the complex scriptures, and understanding the broader aspects of the painting.

Roy Nachum teases his audience to interpret through touch rather than sight. His canvases all carry poetic and pertinent messages or poems written in braille. His technique creates a paradox, whereby the surface of the paintings should not be handled/touched, creating a dilemma where any attempt to decipher the message is rendered useless.

Belgian artist Fred Eerdekens, whom we are featuring for the first time, makes impressive wall mounted sculptures consisting of peculiar sentences, made apparent through the shadow projected on the wall. The works are mesmerizing, where the viewers become trapped between the message and its technical intricacy.

The works of SEEN pay tribute to one of the earliest reasons for which street artists to paint their urban environment, to cover the neighbourhood with their signature, enforcing a sense of self identity.

Adding to the multicultural nature of this exhibition, artworks from Pokras Lampas highlight the theme through calligraphy, an art practice deeply rooted in Slavic culture.

Last but not least, a beautiful work on paper, from none other than Jean-Michel Basquiat, features naive, almost childlike, sentences mixed into the wild composition.

If pictures are worth thousands of words, we hope that the conversations our artists start through their works will transcend the words of script and image, in an eloquent speechlessness.

Gilles Dyan
Founder and Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

Sylvain P. Gaillard
Director
Opera Gallery Dubai



Alessandro Algardi (b. 1945)

Alessandro Algardi was born in Milan in 1945. Influenced by the Milanese movement of Piero Manzoni and Lucio Fontana, Algardi's work is a unique mix of poetry, calligraphy, the power of monochrome and the gentleness of light. The artist has participated in over one hundred exhibitions throughout the world, notably at the Venice International Centre of the Arts and the MoMA in New York.

In the United States, Algardi's work is part of the permanent collections of the Museum of Art in Dubuque, Iowa and the College of Art and Design in Savannah, Georgia; in Italy at the Museo di Giovanni Verga in Vizzini.

Algardi's work fluctuates within the experimental field of the visual-poetic, examining the fluidity between the act of writing and the materiality of the canvas. Working on monochromatic canvas and paper, his works reveal several layers of scripture superimposed onto one another to generate unreadable lines of text. While the text becomes indecipherable, the negative space in between suggests a symphony in what remains unsaid.

Alessandro Algardi

Da titolare, 2013
Oil on canvas
220 x 180 cm - 86.6 x 70.9 in

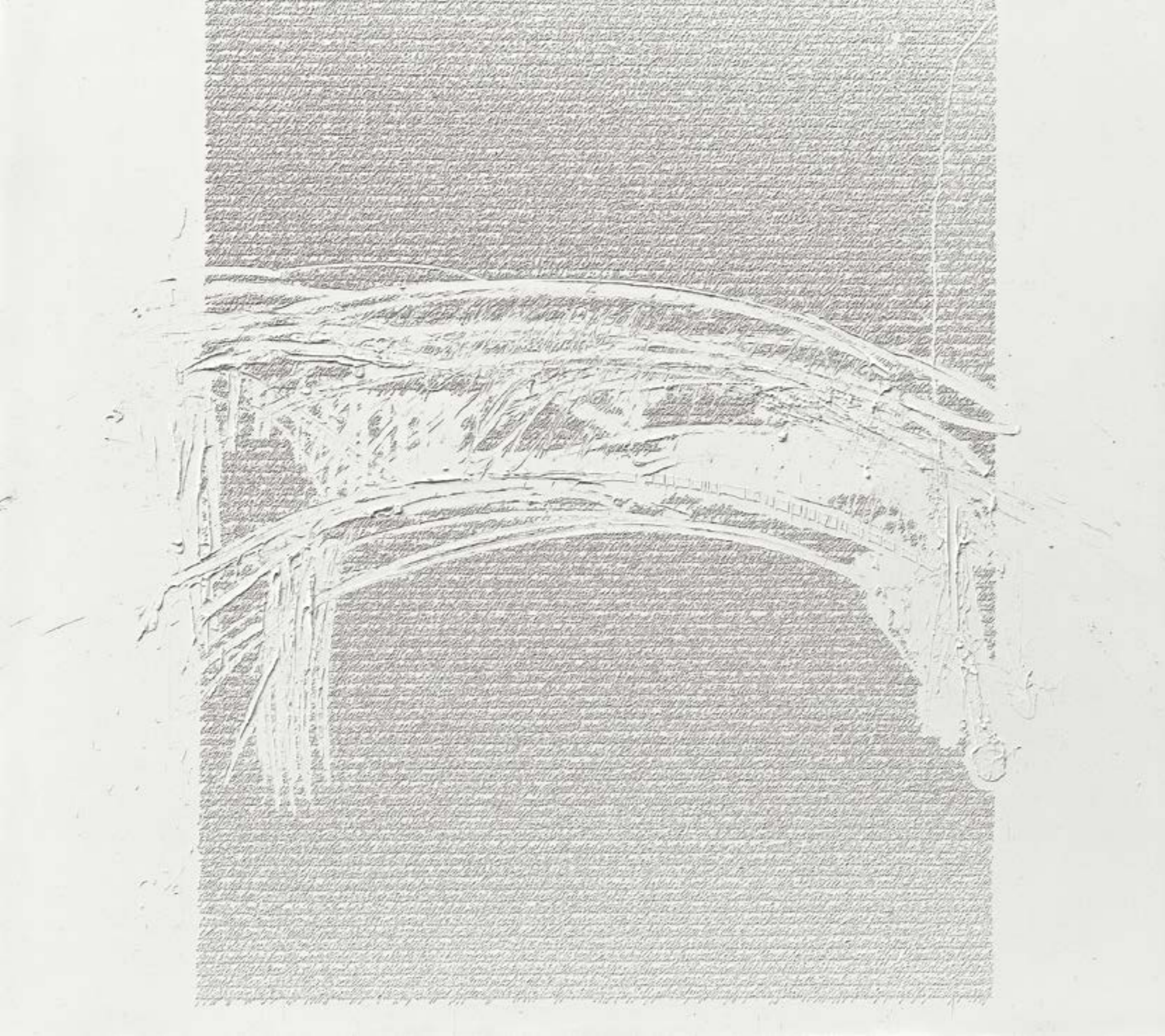


Alessandro Algardi

Pensiero tangibile, 2007

Oil on canvas

176 x 200 cm - 69.3 x 78.7 in



[Illegible cursive handwriting]

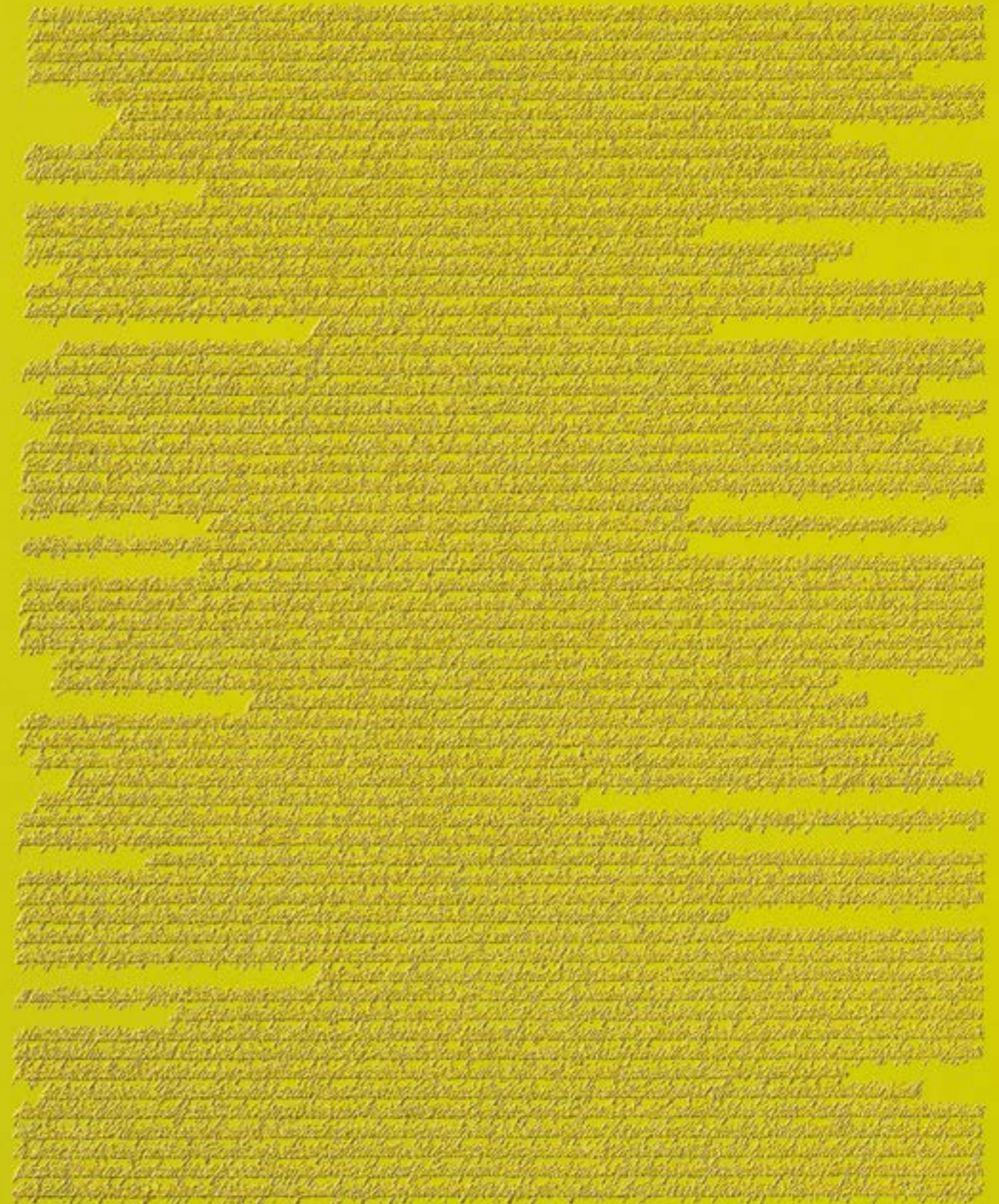
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Alessandro Algardi

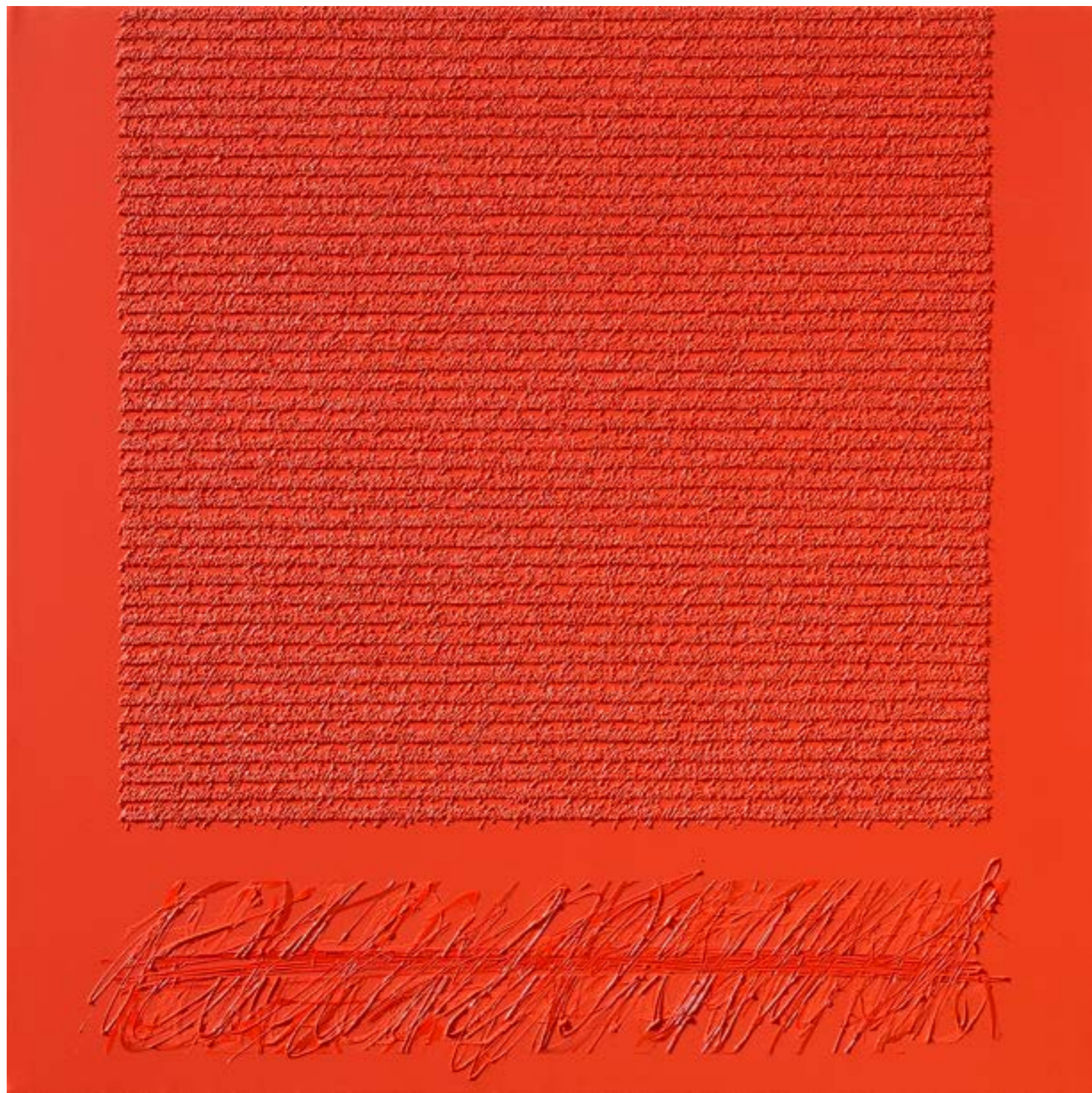
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Similitudine aniconica (or), 2014
Oil on canvas
35.1 x 59.9 cm - 13.8 x 23.6 in

Racconto decodificato, 2014
Oil on canvas
180 x 150 cm - 70.9 x 59.1 in



Alessandro Algardi



Tra segno e scrittura, 2017
Oil on canvas
140 x 140 cm - 55.1 x 55.1 in

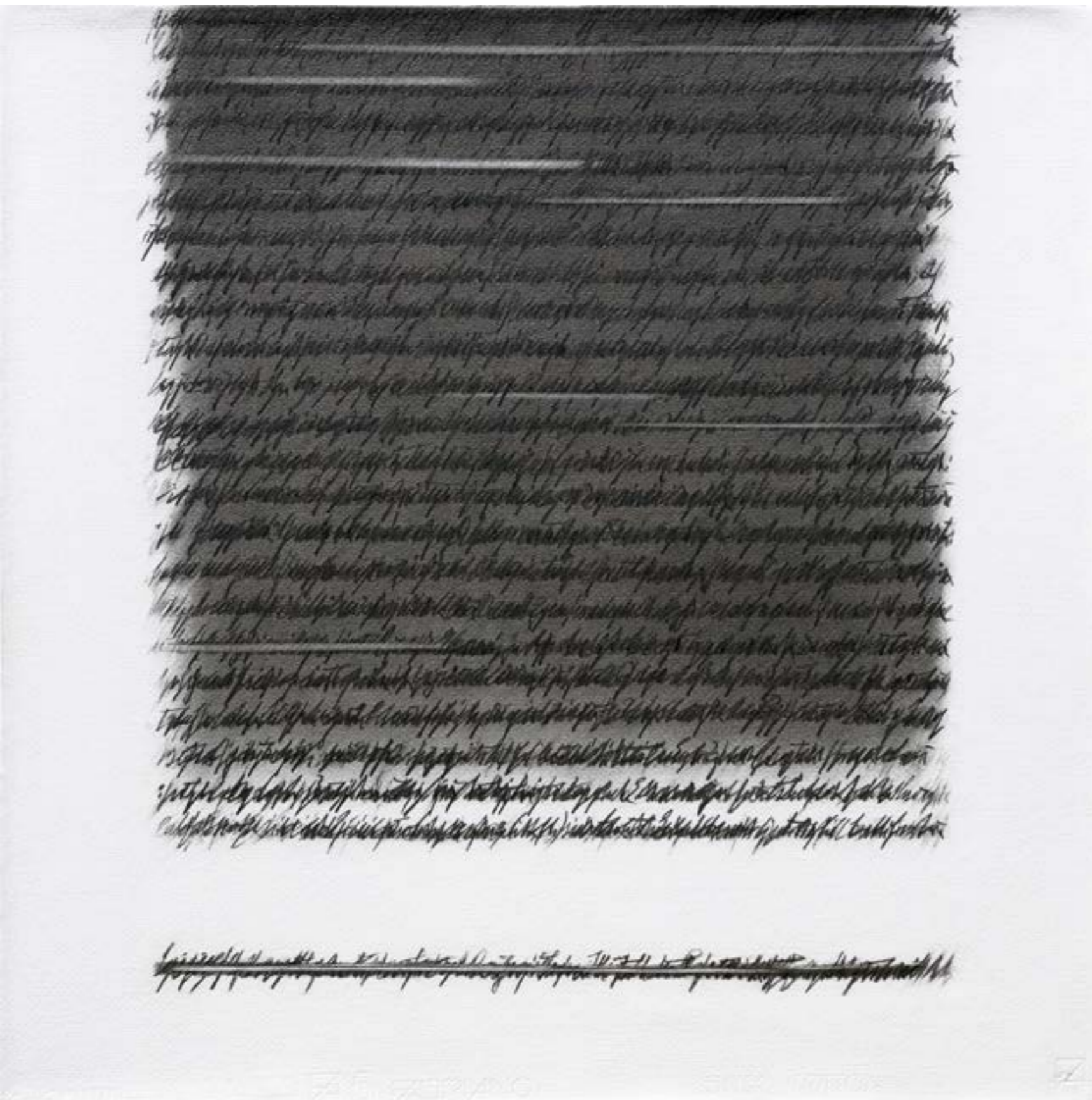
Alessandro Algardi

Untitled, 2016
Graphite on paper
101 x 72 cm - 39.8 x 28.3 in



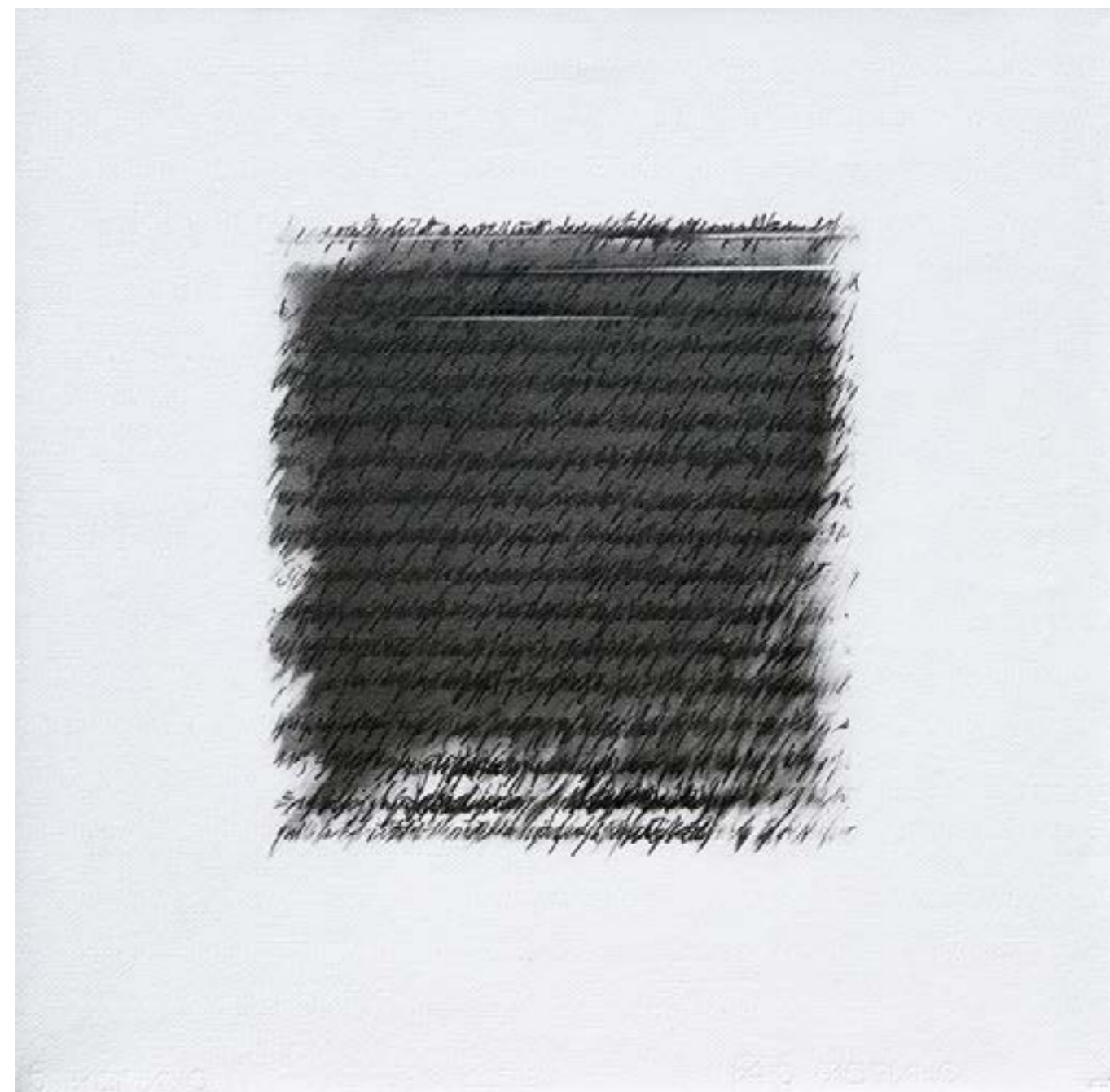
Alessandro Algardi

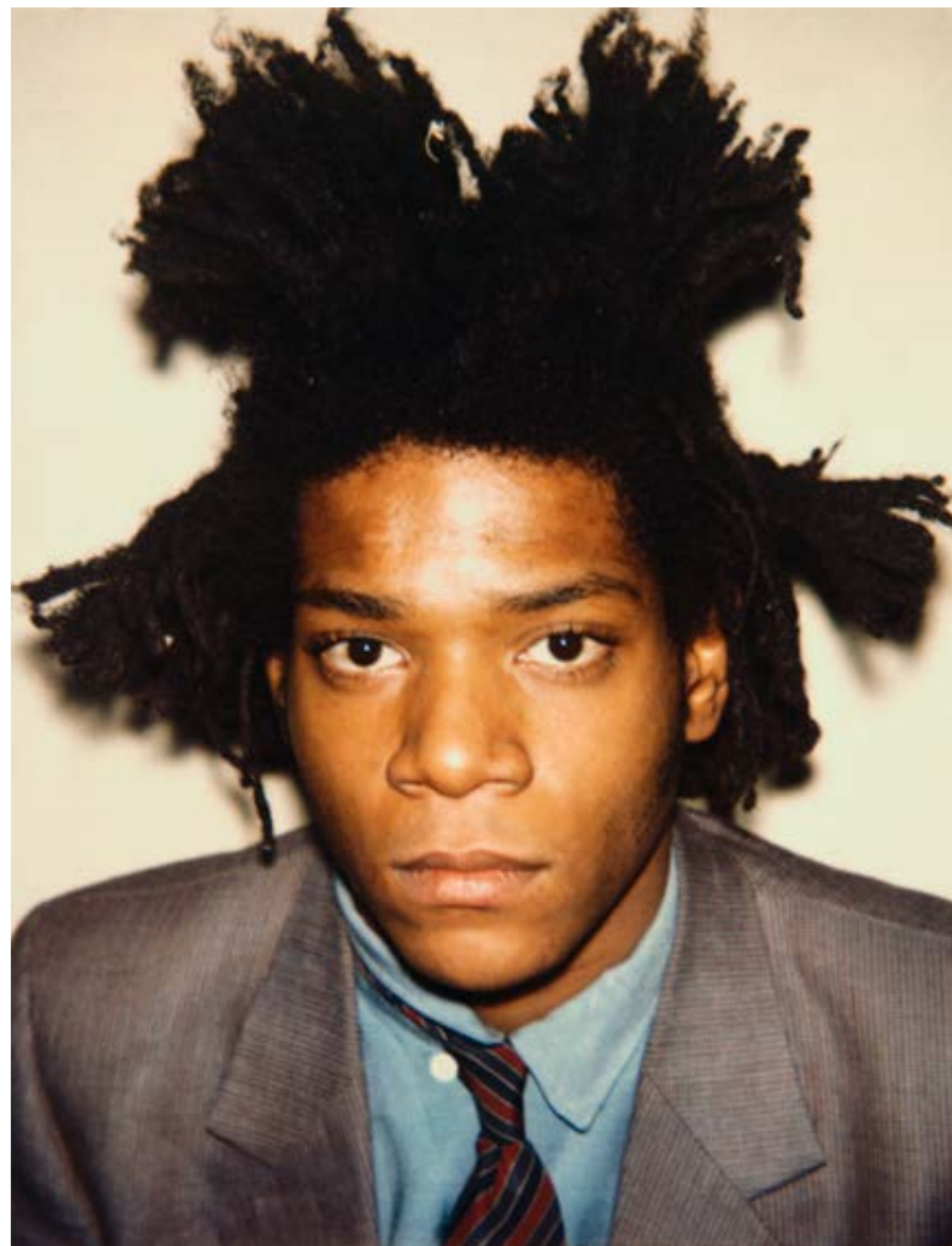
Untitled, 2018
Oil on canvas
60 x 60 cm - 23.6 x 23.6 in



Alessandro Algardi

Untitled, 2018
Oil on canvas
60 x 60 cm - 23.6 x 23.6 in





Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960 - 1988)

Jean-Michel Basquiat was born in Brooklyn, New York, USA in 1960. Basquiat's mother was Puerto Rican, his father Haitian. Basquiat started to draw in the street with the four letters SAMO (short for "Same Old Shit"), topped by a crown. He made a living by selling postcards made with collages of photocopies and T-shirts that he painted himself, with the words "Man Made". In 1980, he took part in his first shows. His works won instant critical acclaim. He drew attention from influential art dealers, and his works were included in major international exhibitions. In no time his work was in great demand — and the prices soared. He spent all his money on travels and drugs. Basquiat mixed countless illustrative sources together: anatomy manuals, newspapers, comic strips, album covers, portraits of jazz musicians. When he faced his canvas, he behaved like a painter, poet and tagger. He worked out his compositions with great care, wrote words and snippets of sentences and covered them with graffiti. Basquiat died of an overdose at 27. His art was one of the rare forms to circulate freely through all social strata and attract enthusiasm from all sorts of people who were usually marked more by the abysses between them.

Basquiat has been represented in many prominent museum collections all over the world including the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart in Berlin and the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona in Spain.

Jean-Michel Basquiat

Untitled, 1981
Oil pastel on paper
70 x 100 cm - 27.6 x 39.4 in

Provenance
Galleria D'Arte Moderna Emilio Mazzoli, Modena
Private collection, Milano

Exhibited
Modena, Galleria D'Arte Emilio Mazzoli, Samo, maggio 1981
Isernia, Museo Arte Contemporanea Isernia, Palazzo della Provincia,
L'Arte in Testa. Storia di un'ossessione da Picasso ai giorni nostri,
2004



Ben (b.1935)



Ben Vautier in his Nice studio photographed by Gil Zetbase

Born in 1935 in Naples, Italy, Ben (Benjamin Vautier) is a French artist born to an Irish and Occitan mother, and a Francophone Swiss father. He is the grandson of Marc Louis Benjamin Vautier, painter of the 19th century. After the declaration of war in 1939, Ben and his mother go around Switzerland, Turkey, Egypt and Italy and finally settle down in Nice in 1949.

At the end of the 1950s, he opens a second-hand disc store which he decorates the facade. Quickly, his shop becomes a place for meetings and exhibitions of the main members of what will become the School of Nice: César, Arman, Martial Raysse. Close to Yves Klein and inspired by Nouveau Réalisme, he is convinced that “art must be new and bring a shock”.

Like many artists in the 1960s, Ben connects art and life explaining that everything is art and that everything is possible in art. In 1964, Ben met George Brecht in New York and inspired by the letterism, the surrealism and dada, which touch as well the poetry, the words, and the painting, he adheres to the Fluxus group. It corresponds to his thirst for humour and especially to the abolition of the barriers between everyday life and art. His writings in the artwork have certain messages or reflect thoughts that cross his mind and poetise the daily life around us.

Ben's work has been exhibited in the world's largest private and public institutions, including MoMA in New York, Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris and Musée d'art moderne et d'Art contemporain in Nice.

Ben

L'amour c'est de la tendresse (Love is tenderness), 2002
Signed and dated on the reverse
Acrylic on canvas
130 x 162 cm - 51.2 x 63.8 in



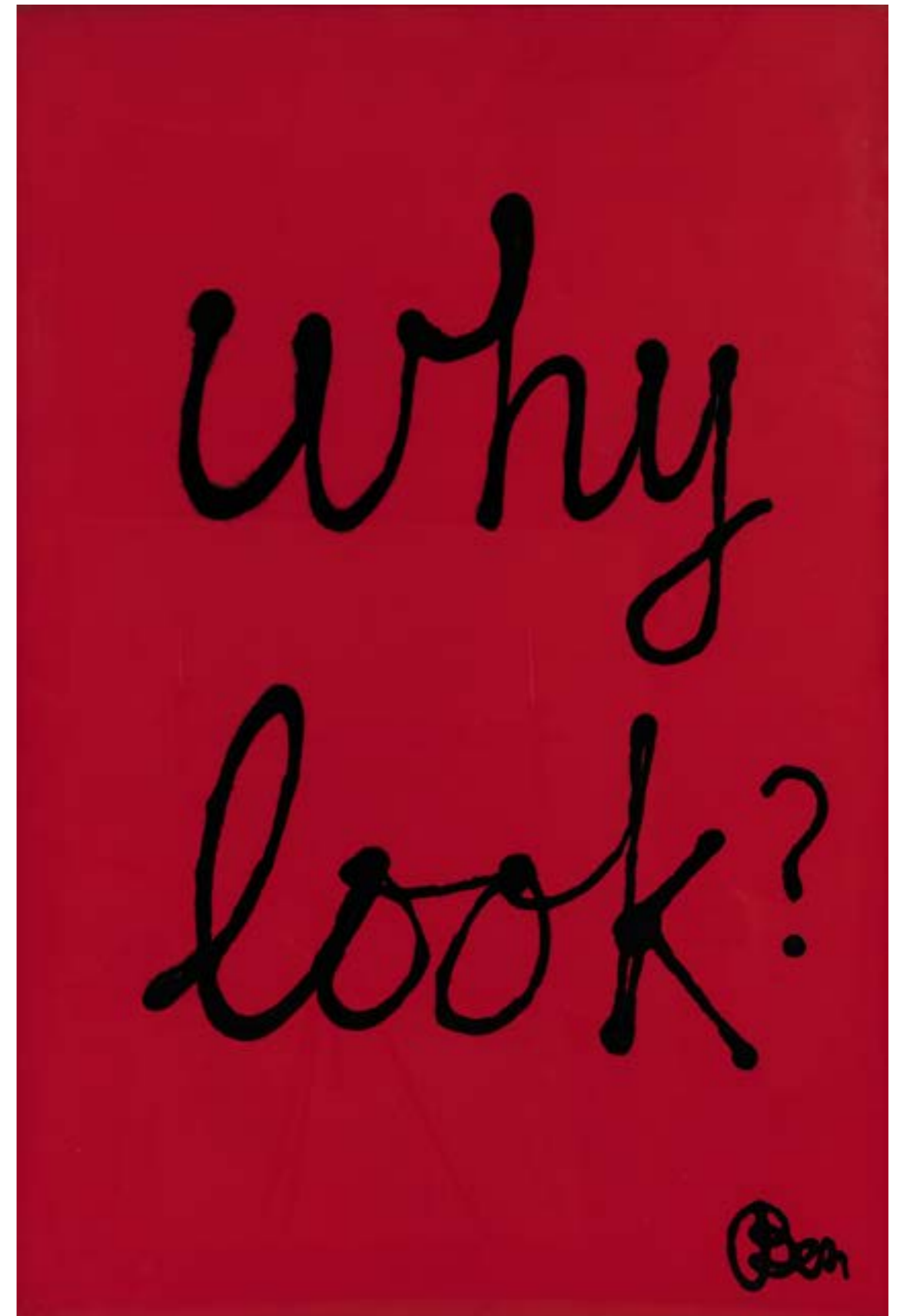
Ben

Why look ?, 1981
Acrylic on canvas
195 x 130 cm - 76.8 x 51.2 in

Provenance
Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
Private collection, France

Exhibited
Saint-Etienne, Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, *Ben libre et fou*, 1981
New York, Castelli Gallery, *Leading contemporary artists from France*,
6 February - 6 March 1982

Certificate
The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work





Mel Bochner (b. 1940)

Mel Bochner was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA in 1940. Mel Bochner is recognised as one of the leading figures in the development of Conceptual Art in 1960s and 1970s New York. Bochner became part of a new generation of artists that also included Eva Hesse, Donald Judd and Robert Smithson — artists who, like Bochner, were looking at ways of breaking with Abstract Expressionism and traditional compositional artistic devices. His pioneering introduction of the use of written language within the visual image, led Harvard University art historian Benjamin Buchloh to describe his 1966 show, *Working Drawings*, as “probably the first truly conceptual exhibition”. Bochner came of age during the latter half of the 1960s, coinciding with a period of radical change within society, which became reflected in his art. Bochner has consistently probed the conventions of both painting and of language, the way we construct and understand each of them, and the way they relate to one another to make us more attentive to the unspoken codes that underpin our engagement with the wider world.

Bochner's works have been widely exhibited throughout his career. In 1995, the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, Connecticut, showed his work in a retrospective titled *Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible 1966 - 1973*, becoming a book of the same name. In 2011, another retrospective, *In the Tower: Mel Bochner*, was shown at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. His writings on art also include the book *Solar System & Rest Rooms: Writings and Interviews, 1965 - 2007*.

Mel Bochner



Money, 2015

Signed on the reverse with graphite

Monoprint with collage, engraving and embossment on hand-dyed

Twinrocker handmade paper

243.2 x 164.5 - 95.7 x 64.8 in

Provenance

Two Palms Gallery

Private collection, New York

Certificate

The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Pokras Lampas (b. 1991)

Born in September, 1991 in Korolyo, Russia, Pokras Lampas can be identified as one of the most distinguished modern calligraphy artists. Pokras Lampas's artistic background comes from street calligraphy, as well as from graphic design. Eight years ago, he started creating graffiti, inspired by street calligraphy and the first Calligrafitti projects. Devious of cultivating his knowledge of the history of calligraphy, Pokras Lampas constantly travels around the globe exchanging ideas and learning, from both historical masters and his contemporaries.

He mainly utilises Cyrillic and Latin letters. The language used by Lampas does not come only from these sources. However, through his process of self-development and research, the artist came across Korean calligraphy alongside Japanese, Chinese, Greek and Arabic letters to change the forms of Cyrillic letters. By combining lettering from various locations, the artist pursued a desire to show the harmony of different cultures within modern calligraphy, and to emphasise the strong multiculturalism of our time.

The artist weaves intimate links with texture, tool and paint. However, experimentation and freedom of creativity play a huge part in his creation. This comes through large sized works on roofs or mural, or his participating in fashion performances – inspired by Alexander McQueen's runway shows. He also collaborates with well recognised international and local brands and experiments with new technologies such as virtual reality.

Lampas aims at showing the connection between different cultures, fused together by calligraphy in balance and harmony. To reach this idea, he created a self-developed movement called "Calligrafuturism". Adopting Latin, Cyrillic, Arabic and Asian calligraphy, merged together with his emotions, experience and knowledge, Pokras Lampas created a concept of futuristic international calligraphy.

Pokras Lampas

Let The Artworks Speak For Us, 2018
Acrylic paint, glossy paint, calligraphy inks on canvas
150 x 200 cm - 59.1 x 78.7 in





Roy Nachum (b. 1979)

Born in 1979, Roy Nachum attended The Cooper Union school in New York. His experimental paintings, installations and sculptures incorporate elements traditionally used in conceptual and interactive art. His large-scale paintings often include Braille text in relief to create an artwork that is witty, compelling and autonomous. A recurring subject of his work is a child wearing a gold crown that covers his eyes, suggesting Man's blindness caused by displaced values and desire.

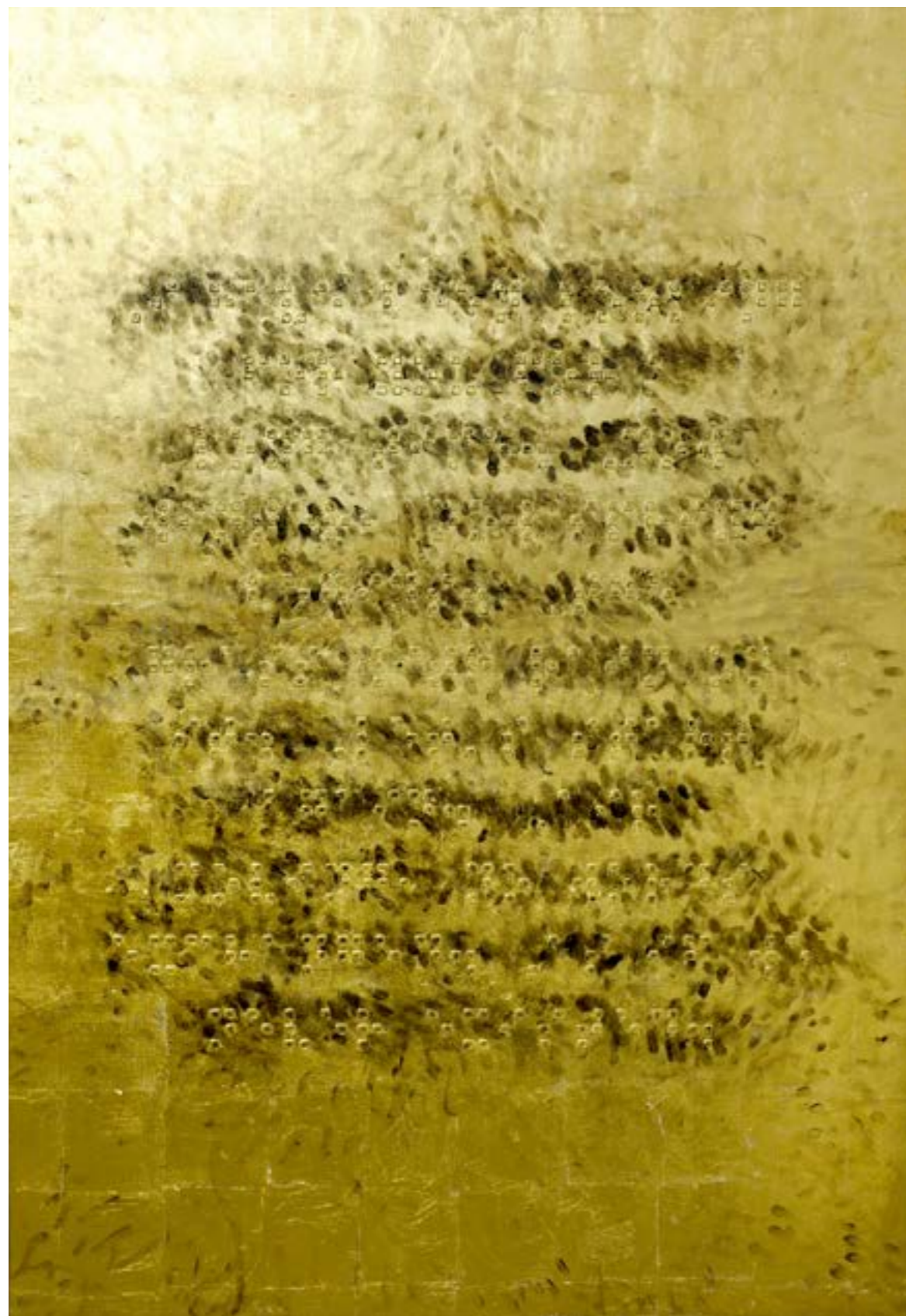
In his *Fire paintings* series (*Fire*, 2011), Roy Nachum utilises Braille text and ashes in works executed with the participation of blind people, even leaving fingerprints as evidence of human touch. Whether experimenting with text and colour, investigating colour blindness (*S3*, 2015) or working with interactive installations and sculptures (*Sea of Crowns*, 2012), Roy Nachum's central artistic interest relates to visual perception.

He sees his work as an "eye opener": a vehicle meant to allow viewers to confront their own existential apprehensions. Roy Nachum starts painting before leaving the viewer free to complete it. Indeed, he encourages people to touch and interact with the work, believing that human interaction is what keeps the work alive and what breaks down the barrier between spectator and "sacred object". Imbued with its own evolution, the artwork takes form through a series of unstructured experiments.

Roy Nachum's work is included in many important public and private collections worldwide. He was nominated in 2017 for a Grammy Award for best recording packaging for his art and art direction of Rihanna's acclaimed album "Anti" (*If They Let Us*, 2016, ANTI, Album Cover, RIHANNA).

Roy Nachum currently lives in New York and works in New York and Italy.

Roy Nachum



Air, 2015
Oil and ash on canvas
193 x 137.2 cm - 76 x 54 in

Roy Nachum

Time, 2017
Oil on canvas
58 x 46 cm - 22.8 x 18.1 in



Roy Nachum



Voices, 2017
Oil on canvas
58 x 46 cm - 22.8 x 18.1 in

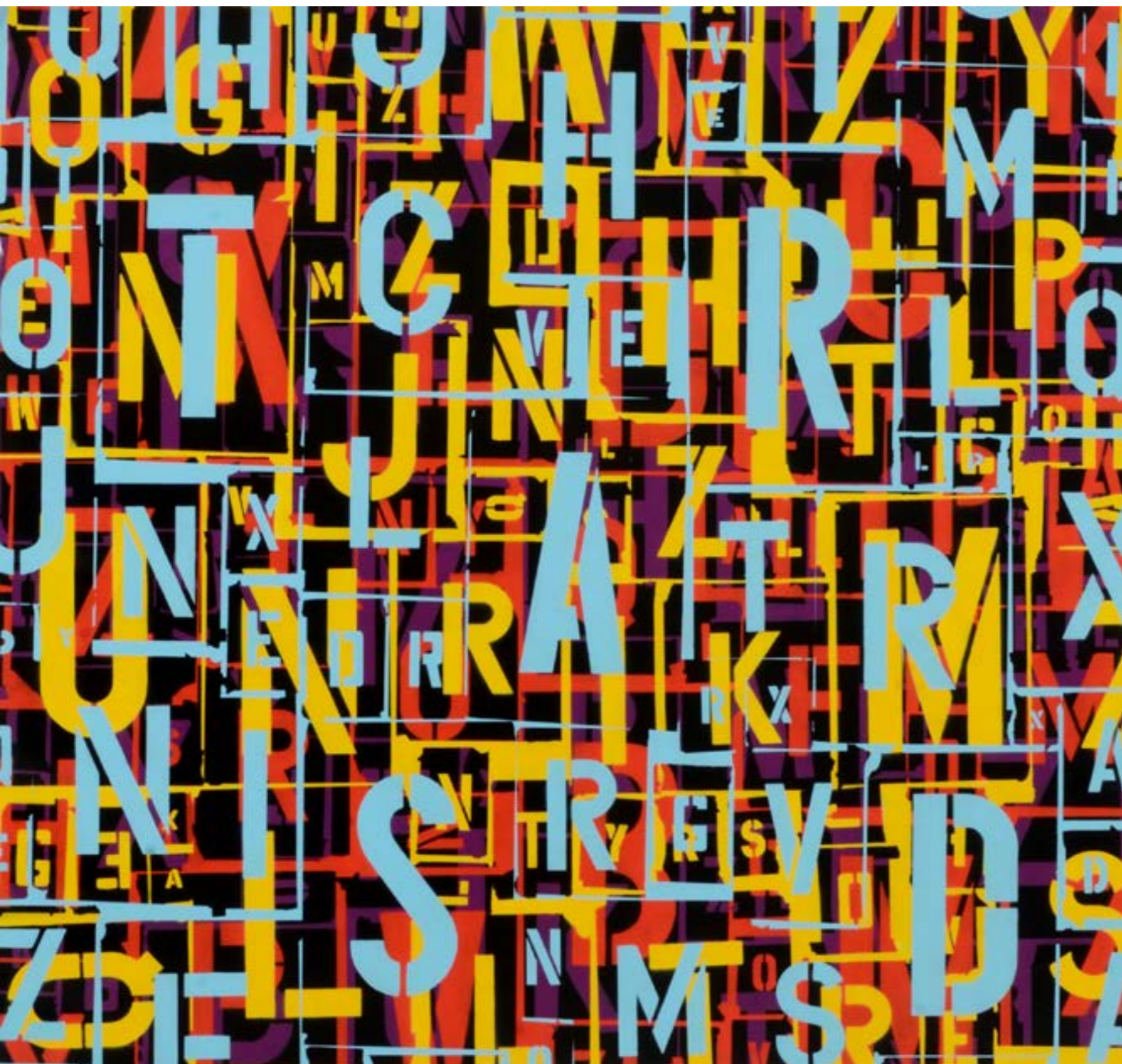


SEEN (b. 1961)

SEEN is known to be the Godfather of graffiti. Richard Mirando, aka SEEN, spent his teen years in the 70's spray painting New York subway trains, quickly gaining reputation as a prolific and highly stylized tagger.

Recognised for his bright coloured lettering and cartoon characters, SEEN's top-to-bottom subway canvases have become iconic images of the time. In the 1980s, he became one of the first graffiti artists to produce works on canvas for gallery and museum shows, exhibiting alongside artists such as Keith Haring, Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat. The shift pioneered the acceptance of graffiti and street art as venerable cultural symbols. Shifting away from the streets, SEEN ran one of the most successful tattoo studios in New York City throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Returning recently to largescale canvases, his new work incorporates a childhood fascination with comic book heroes with the immortalisation of imagery on a big screen.

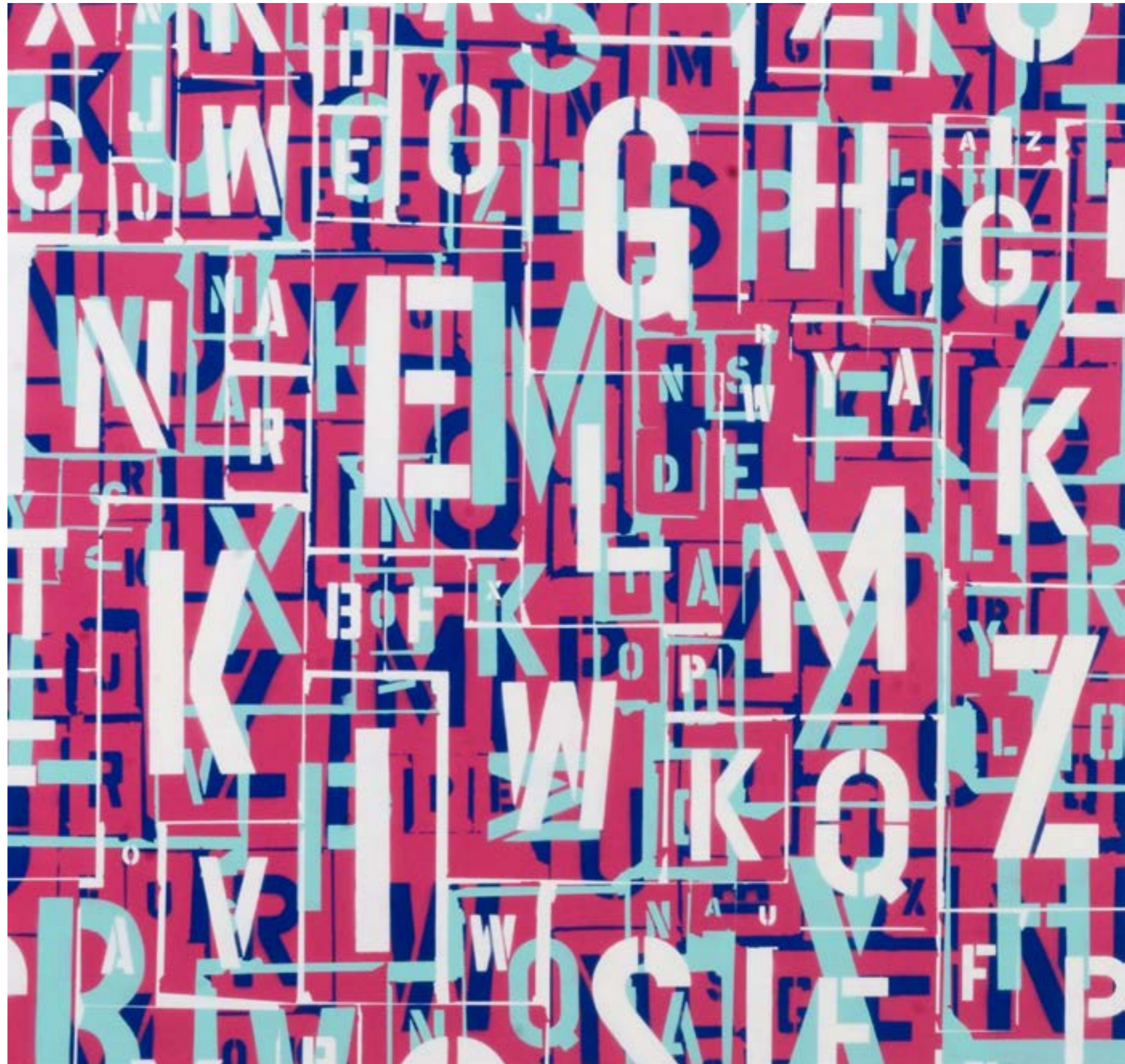
SEEN



Letters #04
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
140 x 150 cm - 55.1 x 59.1 in

SEEN

Letters #05
Stencil (spray paint on canvas)
150 x 160 cm - 59.1 x 63 in





Fred Eerdeken's (b. 1951)

Fred Eerdeken, born in 1951 in Heusden-Zolder, Belgium, is a visual artist, living and working in Hasselt, Belgium.

He studied sculpture and graphic art at the Provincial Higher Institute of Art and Architecture in Hasselt, Belgium, and was a professor at PHL (current MAD Academy) in Hasselt and HISK in Antwerp, Belgium. His career was interrupted for almost four years due to a serious car accident in 2006.

Eerdeken works mainly in three dimensions with the components of language, material, light and shadow. The basis for his works are the texts he writes. He often associates opposite notions — sometimes words contradicting each other, and the meaning shifts and turns about.

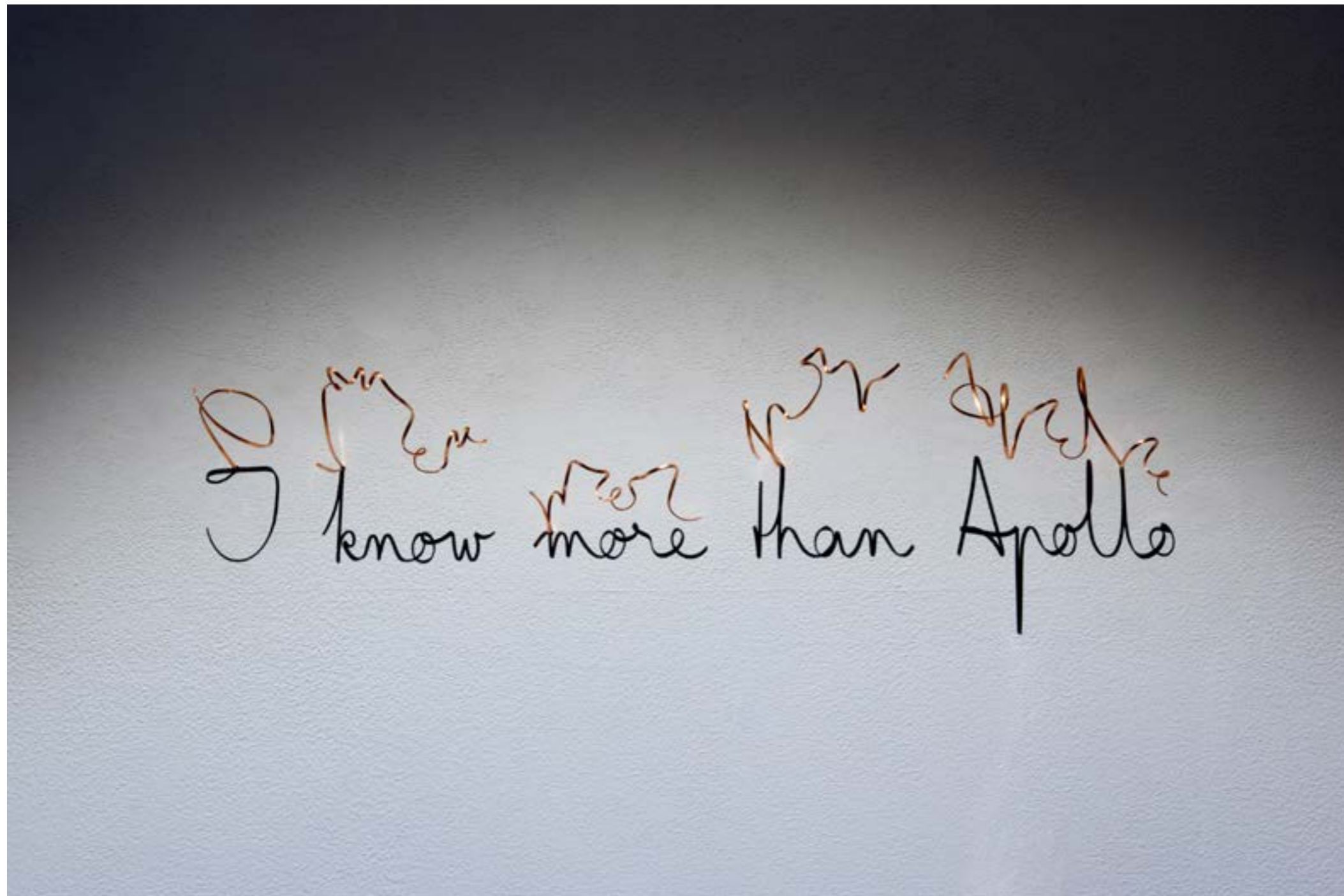
His very sculptural body of work provides the impetus to see the world in a way which can only be imagined through words. In the shadows, where the light fails, a story of things lacking is often told, sometimes abrupt, sometimes lyrical or longing. Besides his sculptural works, Eerdeken draws in a variety of techniques and materials, most often in watercolour.

Fred Eederkens

I listen to myself, 2017
Wood
45 x 15 x 15 cm - 17.7 x 5.9 x 5.9 in



Fred Eederkens



I know more than Apollo, 2018
Copper, light source
18 x 66 x 14 cm - 7.1 x 26 x 5.5 in

glow

Fred Eerdekens

Blur, 2018
Copper, nickel, light source
62 x 28 x 33 cm - 24.4 x 11 x 13 in



Tracey Emin (b. 1963)



Tracey Emin was born in London in 1963, and studied at Maidstone College of Art and the Royal College of Art, London.

Her art is one of disclosures, using her life events as inspiration for works ranging from painting, drawing, video and installation, to photography, needlework and sculpture. Emin's work has an immediacy and often sexually provocative attitude that firmly locates her *œuvre* within the tradition of feminist discourse. By re-appropriating conventional handicraft techniques for radical intentions, Emin's work resonates with the feminist tenets of the 'personal as political'. In *Everyone I've Ever Slept With* (1963 – 1995), one of her most famous installation works, Emin used the process of *appliqué* to inscribe the names of lovers, friends and family within a small tent, inside of which the viewer had to crawl, becoming both *voyeur* and *confidante*.

Tracey Emin has exhibited extensively internationally including solo and group exhibitions in Holland, Germany, Japan, Australia and America. In 2007, she represented Britain at the 52nd Venice Biennale, was elected Royal Academician and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Royal College of Art, London. She also received doctorate in Lettres from the University of Kent and in Philosophy from London Metropolitan University. During the Edinburgh Festival in 2008, Emin's survey exhibition *20 Years* opened at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and then toured to Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain and the Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland (March 19th – June 21st 2009). She also had major solo exhibitions at the Hayward, London as well as at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Tracey Emin



What Colour is a Kiss, 2015
Neon
Edition of 3 + 2 AP
116 x 130 cm - 45.7 x 51.2 in

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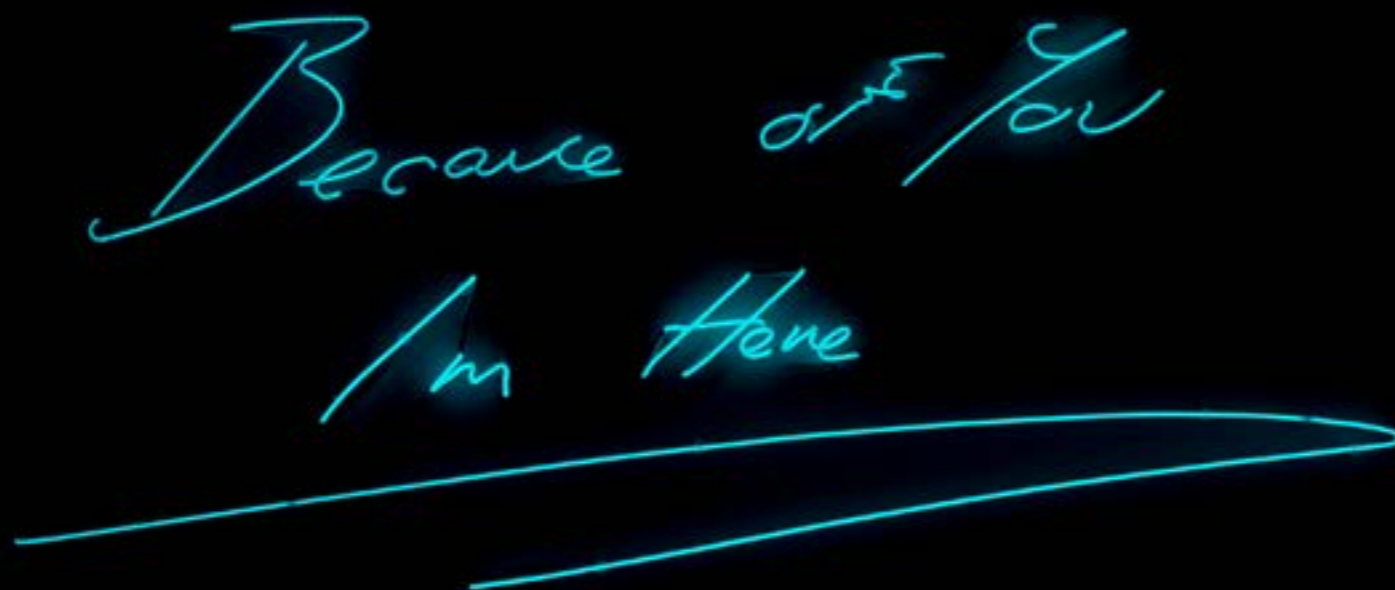
What Colour is a Kiss X, 2018
Neon
Edition of 3 + 2 AP
85 x 201 x 7 cm - 33.5 x 79.1 x 2.8 in

Certificate
The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work under
no. EMIN-061-2018

What Colour vs A Kiss



Tracey Emin



Because of You I'm Here, 2015

Neon

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

76 x 191 x 6.5 cm - 30.7 x 75.2 x 2.6 in

Certificate

The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work under
no. EMIN-014-2015

Published by Opera Gallery to coincide with exhibition *More Than Words*, October 2019.

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