

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MEL BOCHNER**

**GOING OUT OF BUSINESS!**

*(and other recent paintings on velvet)*

**14 OCTOBER - 14 NOVEMBER 2014**

**PRIVATE VIEW: MONDAY 13 OCTOBER, 6 – 8PM**

Simon Lee Gallery is proud to present an exhibition of new paintings by Mel Bochner. This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the Gallery, and the first presentation of his paintings in London since the critically acclaimed exhibition *Mel Bochner: If the Colour Changes* at The Whitechapel Gallery in 2012.

The exhibition will consist of a new body of word paintings on velvet. Of his velvet paintings Bochner has written:

"I began making paintings on velvet in 2005. The initial impulse came from a book on incunabula (printing before the invention of movable type). In most cases these books and broadsheets were woodblocks printed on paper, but a few were printed on cloth. That gave me the idea of trying to print directly on various kinds of unprimed textiles—linen, cotton, silk, etc. Unfortunately, without primer, paint was absorbed into their porous surfaces. Velvet, much to my surprise, was the only material that kept the paint up. And while it wasn't my intention, the kitschy aura of paintings-on-velvet (*Elvis!*) was an unexpected but not unwelcome bonus.

Since Jackson Pollock, one of the directions painting has taken has been to exploit the expressiveness of paint itself. But while Pollock proclaimed "no chaos, damn it!" it is the surrender of control that frees the paint to express its *paintness*. In the velvet paintings the paint is delivered to the surface indirectly. First a computer-controlled laser engraves the text into a thick acrylic sheet, which will serve as a printing matrix. Then, letter by letter, the words are hand-filled with pure oil paint, sometimes up to a pound per letter. Finally, the velvet is laid face down on the plate, placed in a hydraulic press, and subjected to 750 tons of vertical pressure. With so many uncontrollable variables (temperature, humidity, viscosity, and pressure) there is no predicting what the paint will do. The paint's chemistry, its "fluids and ground-up stones," determines, beyond any dictates of good or bad taste, what the final painting will look like. Under pressure the paint, with nothing to prevent it, bleeds freely into weirdly marbled puddles. The more viscous colors spurt out of the letters, while the densely pigmented ones emerge in wrinkled globs. The random smudging and smearing render some words unreadable, obliterate others, and further estrange them from any "necessary and sufficient" meaning. When the velvet is pulled off the plate, the result is always a surprise, sometimes a jolt."

-Mel Bochner, *Some thoughts on Color, Language, Painting and Blah, Blah, Blah*, 2007 / 2013

Mel Bochner was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1940. He lives and works in New York, NY. He received a BFA degree from the Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1962 (major in painting; minor in philosophy). He has taught aesthetics, art history and sculpture at the School of Visual Arts, New York, since 1965. In 2001 he was the Adjunct Professor at Yale University, New Haven. His first one-man exhibition was held at the Visual Arts Gallery at the School of Visual Arts in 1966. Mel Bochner's work has been featured in numerous international exhibitions including, most recently; *Mel Bochner: Strong Language*, Jewish Museum, New York (2014), *Mel Bochner: If the Colour Changes*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2012). This exhibition travelled to Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2013); and Fundação de Serralves, Porto, Portugal (2013), *In the Tower: Mel Bochner*, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (2011). His work is included in many major public and private collections internationally, including; Tate, London; Centre Georges Pompidou- Musée national d' art moderne, Paris; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; MoMA - Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington; Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh; MOCA, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles.

For further press information, images and interview requests please contact Julia or Jay at Purple:  
julia@purplepr.com | Jay@purplepr.com | +44 (0) 207 434 7010

12 BERKELEY STREET  
LONDON W1J 8DT  
T +44 (0) 20 7491 0100  
F +44 (0) 20 7491 0200  
INFO@SIMONLEEGALLERY.COM

SIMON LEE GALLERY LTD  
REGISTERED IN ENGLAND 4316341  
GB 788 061 692