

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**PAUL SIETSEMA**

**12 February – 26 March 2022**

**Opening Reception: Saturday 12 February, from 6 to 8 pm**

*I like the idea [of] an artwork turning in on itself; relying on an economy of image making, depiction, representation.*

—Paul Sietsema, 2021

Marian Goodman Gallery Paris is pleased to present the first major solo exhibition by Paul Sietsema in France. The exhibition, also the first by the artist at the gallery, will feature painted works and 16mm films. Sietsema's approach to image-making draws its inspiration from socio-economic and aesthetic systems. Alternating between analog and digital processes, Paul Sietsema employs existing imagery, borrowed from the visual arts, or found objects as a starting point to create unique pictorial compositions where representation and materiality are often interlaced.

At the gallery the artist presents a curated selection of eight new paintings and one drawing from different series. Four of the works derive from his long-time interest in 'currency' as aesthetic and symbolic objects that extend a system of power. Two of the paintings, *Carriage Painting (Green Square)* (2022) and *Carriage Painting* (2022), are abstract. The original pictorial layer of two anonymous paintings bought at small auctions is mostly removed; depictions of torn dollar bills are added that simultaneously exhibit destructive and decorative qualities. Sietsema explains: "A bill is torn and dropped onto a scanner bed to record its new image-form, which is then transferred to the found painting. This is an act of subtle transformation that turns an ornate print with a simple relationship to its assigned value into a work of art with a more complicated relationship to value."

Consider *Vertical Coin Game* (2021) and *Vertical Newspaper (Modern British & Irish Art)* (2021), for example, where dollar coins were used to move paint on a surface. "The geometric bodies of the coins moving against the rectangular edge of the canvas create a simple game of composition. The questionable painterly acts of composing and resting on the material qualities of paint to instill meaning are insinuated," Sietsema notes of the former. In the latter, coins and paint are mixed and the combination is thrown like dice. The resulting shape obscures the image of a sculpture—a figure at rest by Henry Moore—reproduced in a newspaper ad for an auction house.

'The figure at rest' is a motif that can also be seen in two of Sietsema's paintings, *Woman Sitting* (2022) and *Black Picasso* (2022), each modeled on a work by Pablo Picasso. In these paintings, 'the figure at rest' is discordant with the complex process behind the work. "I'm interested in the way image production has become an almost effortless task with digital media and platforms; a kind of leisure activity," Sietsema said. "My work involves much labor and handwork but has many of its origins in digital processes and related ideas."

Exhibition posters created to mark the occasion of a gift of Picasso's works to France in the 1990's served as inspiration for several of Sietsema's works in the exhibition. While *Last Painting* (2021) is a more precise replica of one of these fictionalized posters, which displays what was presumably the last landscape painted by Picasso, Sietsema transforms *The Embrace* (2022) and *Black Picasso* (2022) into a variant of the monochrome using a digital masking technique.

"I use the color of the design element in a poster (in this case the text) to create a mask for the rest of the image, which is first painted in its entirety. The action is meant to quiet the image, and perhaps slow or stop its original function like a canceled stamp on a letter. The selection of the areas of color to be masked is done piecemeal, using digital tools on a digital image as part of the process, and results in gutters being left somewhat exposed, and other areas too that are not caught in the net of the selection tool. These vestiges of the process make up the final image."

*Black Phone Painting* (2022), in enamel on linen, belongs to a series of paintings where Sietsema depicts rotary dial telephones: "The phone paintings are painted from images of phones with paint poured on them. So paint is the thing being depicted and the image is inscribed with the same paint that is being depicted." For Sietsema these phones reflect the ambiguity of communication itself. "These images I paint can be seen as communicating or not—they are open lines of communication, a connection between myself and someone experiencing the painting or perhaps they are off the hook—mute—a truncated line of communication that leaves them staring at an inert object."

On view in the lower gallery will be two of Sietsema's analog films: *Abstract Composition* (2014) and *At the hour of tea* (2013). As with many of his films, the works investigate the relationship between object and text. In the film, *Abstract Composition*, a colorless sign rotating in space systematically displays descriptions of objects for sale culled by the artist from auction sites and catalogs. The 16mm color film, *At the hour of tea*, is composed of five distinct sequences featuring various anachronistic objects, often related to work, resting on desktops: silver coins, Roman glassware, a leatherette inbox and camera, an envelope, and a typewriter. Interspersed throughout the contemplative film is a typewritten text that describes a historical painting in modernist terms, supplanting first-hand experience with an authorial description.

Paul Sietsema (b. 1968, California) lives and works in Los Angeles. He graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles (1999) and the University of California, Berkeley (1992). Solo exhibitions of Sietsema's work have been organized by many institutions: the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Denver; the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco (NMNM); the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago; the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio; the Kunsthalle Basel; the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (MNCARS) in Madrid; the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA); and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

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