



Paul McDevitt 'Grand Canyon'

19 March – 18 April 2015

Private view – Wednesday 18 March 2015, 6-8pm

Stephen Friedman Gallery is delighted to present a new body of work by Berlin-based, British artist Paul McDevitt. This is the artist's fifth show with the gallery and follows recent exhibitions at the Henry Moore Foundation and Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts.

'Grand Canyon' consists of a series of large-scale charcoal drawings measuring two metres in height which can be seen as contemporary re-appropriations of Pop Art. Throughout his career, McDevitt has deftly juxtaposed the tropes of art history with 'lower' art forms such as cartoon imagery and graffiti. These arresting new works share Pop Art's vital energy and cartoon gesture, but resonate with more recent times of uncertainty, particularly in relation to the instability of the British economy. McDevitt found inspiration for the series in the whitewashed windows of derelict shops across the UK. Through the handling of two humble materials, paper and charcoal, he creates a poignant and dramatic trompe l'oeil effect in each work. Built up layer by layer, these monumental swirls encompass the entire sheet of paper and mimic the gestures of the white wash. In hidden areas we discover the textual remnants of faded signs and peeling posters. Executed with physical movement and energy, the works hover in the space between abstraction and figuration.

The drawings playfully and evocatively recall the changing face of the historic British High Street in light of the recent recession. They act in part as a celebration of the diversification of the High Street, and in part as a lament. The title of the show, 'Grand Canyon', harks back to this idea of conflict and transition by referring to a popular and familiar place, but also to a sense of emptiness and the void. This element of pathos is continued in the textural nature of the works, a tribute to gestural painting which recalls the artist's teenage ambitions to become an abstract painter. Through the optimism inherent in their energy and Pop sensibility, the pathos conveyed in each work is infused with a lighter undercurrent. As such, the drawings suggest both intimate ideas of success and failure, and more widely, a 'British' form of self-deprecation.

'Grand Canyon' presents an exciting development for the artist both in terms of media, scale and conceptual intent. Each compelling drawing entices the viewer with its intricate detail, while relating to both our social fabric and to changing ideas of British identity.

Paul McDevitt was born in 1972 in Troon, Scotland. In 2001 he was awarded the Saatchi fellowship upon completion of an MA in Fine Art at Chelsea College of Art. He now lives and works in Berlin. Recent solo shows include: 'Hunker Down', LICA (Lancaster Institute of Contemporary Arts), Lancaster, UK (2015); Martin Asbaek Gallery (with Cornelius Quabeck), Copenhagen, Denmark (2014); 'A Life Without Shame', Sommer & Kohl, Berlin, Germany (2013); 'Running on Woollen Legs', Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, England (2011); 'What Survives', ALP/Peter Bergman, Stockholm, (2010); 'The Cant', Artspeak, Vancouver (2009); 'Spastic with Cheer', Kunstverein Schwerte (2009). Recent group shows include: 'Body & Void': Echoes of Moore in Contemporary Art, The Henry Moore Foundation, Perry Green, Hertfordshire, UK (2014); 'Unstuck', Espacio Valverde, Madrid, Spain (2013); 'About Stupidity', The Petach Tikva Art Museum, Petach Tikva, Israel (2013); 'Zeichen und Wunder', Kunsthaus Nürnberg, Nürnberg, Germany (2013); 'Der menschen klee', KIT Düsseldorf, Germany (2011); 'Space to Draw', Jerwood Space, London (2008); 'Supernatural', Kunsthalle Andratx, Mallorca (2008); 'Stardust', Musée D'Art Contemporain Du Val-De-Marne (2007) and 'Cult Fiction', Arts Council touring show, New Art Gallery, Walsall et al. (2007).

'Anne Truitt: Drawings' is concurrently on display in Gallery One on Old Burlington Street.

Gallery hours are: Tuesday to Friday, 10am - 6pm and Saturday, 11am - 5pm

For further details please contact Mary Tagg: +44 (0) 20 7494 1434 / mary@stephenfriedman.com

For sales enquiries please contact: sales@stephenfriedman.com

Stephen Friedman Gallery is celebrating its Twentieth Anniversary this year