

## Press Release

**Bernard Piffaretti**

### ***Twin Peaks and Company***

13 March – 29 May 2021

2/F, 27 Huqiu Road, Huangpu District, Shanghai

Opening: 13 March, 5 – 7pm

Lisson Gallery is delighted to open its first exhibition of work by the French artist, Bernard Piffaretti, in Shanghai. The exhibition features a selection of colourful, dynamic new works, all created by the artist in his Paris studio over the past year. The presentation highlights the role of cinema, in particular the visionary filmmakers David Lynch and Orson Welles, in the creation of Piffaretti's 'moving image' style of painting, and the connections between their bodies of work.

Named one of the greatest painters of his generation, Piffaretti has refined his "Piffaretti system" for many decades. These new acrylic on canvas paintings on show in Shanghai, all *Untitled* (2020) like the majority of Piffaretti's oeuvre, illustrate this method. Each painting begins with the artist establishing a clear separation between left and right, by painting 'the central mark' – the vertical line that divides the canvas into two equal sides. The artist then creates an abstract composition of gestural marks on one side, and follows to re-create the image opposite, on the other side of the vertical line. However, while Piffaretti is interested in the process of mirroring, he is not concerned with producing an ideal, symmetrical image. Instead, he purposely paints an inexact, doubled image that instantly challenges our perception and forces us to question what we are seeing. Because we do not know which side the artist painted first (left or right), we cannot identify which side is 'right' or 'wrong', and instead each becomes an equally imperfect double. Our minds actively try to decode the puzzle of Piffaretti's chosen variations, highlighting our inherent psychological and emotional response to this technique.

The title of the show, *Twin Peaks and Company*, was selected by Piffaretti as a tribute to two filmmakers: David Lynch and Orson Welles as, he says, "a kind of twin legacy". *Twin Peaks*, directed by David Lynch, was the famed American horror drama which originally aired in 1990 before returning as a limited series in 2017. Piffaretti, like Lynch, came to prominence in the 1980s, alongside the development of the "high concept" era in cinematic style and the continuation of the filmmaker-driven format. The latter part of the title, *and Company*, refers to Lynch's forerunner, Orson Welles, who greatly influenced Lynch in his formal approach to directing and its psychological effects. In particular, Piffaretti notes the film, 'The Lady from Shanghai' (1947) which Lynch has discussed as a major influence on his work. The finale of this film features a unique climactic shoot-out in the Magic Mirror Maze, a hall of mirrors comprising a multitude of real and false images, where each face is repeated and mirrored numerous times.

Piffaretti's own exploration of visual language is mirrored in the work of Lynch and Welles, and indeed Piffaretti has noted "I practice painting like one would a 'moving picture', I see it as a 'moving situation'", as is often seen in the artist's work. The artists all adopt distortion in their work, mystery, reflections, and a deconstruction of images to push the boundaries of their medium and illustrate the psychological effects of their methods. Piffaretti's work is also influenced by the stylistic negation of filmmakers such as Lynch and Welles, who refuse to be categorized by one artistic vocabulary, as well as the performance of the process. The 'peak' is a recurrent motif in Piffaretti's paintings – one of these, depicting a pair of peaks against a black backdrop, is included in the exhibition. The artist adds: "I noticed in Shanghai there is a shipping line named 'The Twin Peaks Express'. This construction, at different levels, is always in action in my work: the questions involved in the figure of the double, of the twin."

## About Bernard Piffaretti

French artist Bernard Piffaretti bases his practice on repetition while analysing the components of painting. After art studies at the school of Fine Arts in Saint-Etienne from 1973 to 1979, he began to elaborate his “Piffaretti system”, fixed in 1986. This protocol is at the origin of every work he produces: each is composed of two panels apparently identical, separated by a vertical strip; one of the two parts is an attempt to duplicate the other, made beforehand. Once both panels are finished, the distinction between the copy and the original tends to fade. As the artist admits himself, “the repetition, act by act, on the second half of the canvas, can only produce an imperfect image”: Piffaretti's system aims at showing us this impossible reproduction of the artistic gesture. In some works, the second part is even left irremediably blank, because of the complexity of the shapes painted. Piffaretti also realises drawings after paintings, reversing the concept of preparatory sketches and using them to seize his own work.

Bernard Piffaretti was born in Saint-Etienne in 1955. He currently lives and works in Paris. He has had solo exhibitions at Lisson Gallery (online), (2020); galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris, France (2020); Lisson Gallery, New York, USA (2019); galerie Klemm's, Berlin, Germany (2019); Kate MacGarry Gallery, London, UK (2017); Philip Martin Gallery, Los Angeles, USA (2015); Musée d'Art Moderne de St Etienne, France (2009); Musée Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis, France (2008); Gallery Cheim and Read, New York, USA (2002); Fondation Cartier, Paris, France (2000) among others. Major group exhibitions include Gordon Robichaux Gallery, New York, USA (2018); Galerie Frank Elbaz, Dallas, USA (2017); Kunstverein Schwäbisch Hall, Schwäbisch Hall, Germany (2017); Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, USA (2016); Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes, France (2015); Mamco Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Geneva, Switzerland (2007); Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin, Germany (2006).

## About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, two in New York, one in Shanghai, as well as temporary spaces opened in 2020 in East Hampton and London's Mayfair district. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

## Opening Hours

Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm or by appointment

## Press enquiries

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