

LISSON GALLERY

LONDON

PRESS RELEASE

JOHN McCracken

4 May - 2 June 1990

John McCracken has been exhibiting regularly in the United States for over twenty five years. His work has become known in Britain through articles in international art journals such as *Artforum*, but this will be his first exhibition in this country.

Best known for his striking 'plank' works and installations of the later sixties, these invited comparison with contemporary minimalist work by Judd, Andre, Flavin and others. His work was represented both in the watershed *Primary Structures* exhibition of 1966 where the minimalist ethos was effectively announced, and in Michael Fried's seminal essay *Art and Objecthood* where the aesthetic was roundly denounced in favour of more traditional forms of sculpture and painting.

But there were important differences between McCracken's and much related work of the time: whereas other sculptors usually exploited raw, unpainted materials evocative of industry and architecture, McCracken has always worked for a highly reflective, consistently flat finish suggestive of solid blocks of colour, and with a quite different range of associations. This relates to a second important difference: McCracken is a West Coast artist: the look of his work, and the ideas which have informed it derive from an interest in light, colour and perceptual theory - an interest which preoccupied a generation of Los Angeles based artists including Bell, Irwin, Wheeler and McLaughlin. Such concerns gave their work a sense of independence from the New York aesthetic of detachment and autonomy. McCracken's work can be seen in its immaculate surface and monolithic forms to invoke the metaphysical concerns and mystical orientation of West Coast writers such as Carlos Casteneda. While it is important that each work exists as a self-contained abstract unity, for McCracken this does not preclude the possibility of the work dealing with substantial themes, meanings, and questions of being. It is through their pristine abstractness that the works convey a sense of being both real and unreal, both in and out of this world. The rumour that it was work by McCracken which suggested the monolith image to Stanley Kubrick for his classic sci-fi film "2001" is thus highly appropriate. In more properly art historical terms, it was stated in a catalogue essay for a recent exhibition at P.S.1 that "McCracken's use of pure geometric form and saturated colour serve, as they did for Kandinsky, Malevich and Mondrian, as vehicles for deep contemplation of the ultimate nature of things".

These themes are continued in McCracken's first show in Britain at the Lisson Gallery, but this work also marks a major breakthrough, a new phase in his work. The exhibition consists of a series of wall-sculptures, whereas much of his work of the last two decades

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tool to aid design.

Nevada, and he now lives and works in Los Angeles.

Mockett for further information.