

PRESS RELEASE

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PAVEL BÜCHLER

*GEOMETRY, PHYSICS AND THE SCIENCE OF LIFE*

1 July – 6 August 2016

Preview: 30 June, 6-9pm

Tanya Leighton Gallery is pleased to announce *Geometry, Physics and the Science of Life* - Czech-born artist Pavel Büchler's fourth exhibition at the gallery.

The idea of 'work' and its multifarious significance in relation to labour, art and productive thought has long been a subject of Büchler's. Work can be a bootstrapping capitalist ideal, or a vague reference to the sum of an artist's output; 'I love her work'. Büchler's own practice holds a mirror to the schizophrenic definition of the word, revealing its contradictions, ironies and subtleties. For his part, Büchler strikes a careful balance between over-working and not working at all, or rather turning idleness into artwork. Even when over-working, the product is often self-effacing, auto-destructive; 'All that hard work for nothing'.

It is hard not to refer to the artist's oft-quoted description of his practice as 'making nothing happen'.

'Nothing' in this case can be an idle object; popped footballs scavenged from playgrounds, tripods with no cameras attached to them, or outmoded slide projectors without images to project. Büchler's penchant for the left behind or obsolete often initiates his efforts in 'making nothing happen' - these are all objects that for whatever reason don't work anymore, but once did. Our understanding of their former lives is as important as our evaluation of their new ones. This psychology of seeing differently is directly alluded to in *Observational Drawings (Yarbus Rorschach)* in which Büchler has repurposed Russian psychologist Alfred Yarbus' exploration of vision as a product of prior conditioning, revealing that preconceptions colour our visual experience of all images.

'Nothing' can also be the accumulation of something. In the five monochrome paintings, the most recent works on view - *Portrait in Profile*, *Sad Young Man*, and the triptych *Brides* - the artist's work is abstracted to the point of illegibility. Each was previously a failed figurative painting, gifted from a friend who would otherwise have thrown them out. Büchler has scraped the paint from each canvas, ground it with a mortar and pestle, and painstakingly reapplied it as uniformly as possible, obfuscating both the original image and his own weeks of labor. Work is again rendered obscure in *Blind Circles (Under Surveillance)*, the oldest work in the exhibition, completed nearly 40 years ago. A series of seven photographs ostensibly picture performances in which Büchler drew circles while blindfolded. Here the medium has again been disabused of its usual documentary function and coaxed into performing a different role. Rather than capturing one fraction of a second - a moment indicative of the whole repetitive performance - the camera's shutter was left open an entire hour, effectively erasing all but traces of the artist working and leaving only the imperfect results of his efforts.

Pavel Büchler (born 1952, Prague) has been exhibiting internationally for over 30 years and is well known for his pioneering work with language, conceptual art and the moving image, as well as his long career as a professor of art. His recent exhibitions include The National Gallery, Prague; IKON Gallery, Birmingham; the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow; Broad Art Museum, East Lansing; Power Plant, Toronto; Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva; Museion, Bolzano; DOX, Prague; National Gallery, Prague; and Tinguely Museum, Basel.

A major monograph on Büchler's work by Tommy Simoens was published this month by Ludion, Antwerp.