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FRIEDMAN BENDA PRESENTS

CHRISTOPHER LE BRUN: NEW PAINTINGS

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 11, 2014 from 6:30 – 8:30 pm
On View through October 15, 2014



Christopher Le Brun [British, b.1951]
Walton, 2013
Oil on canvas
94.49 x 66.93 inches
20 x 170 cm

New York, NY – Friedman Benda is pleased to open the 2014 fall exhibition season with *Christopher Le Brun: New Paintings* from the celebrated British artist and President of the Royal Academy of Arts, Christopher Le Brun. On view September 11 through October 15, 2014, *New Paintings* marks Le Brun's first solo exhibition in New York in more than 10 years and his first at Friedman Benda.

New Paintings is a revelatory step in the oeuvre of Le Brun, as it demonstrates a renewed pleasure in color, light, and complexity of conceptual process, alongside his characteristic generosity of scale and ambition. These paintings offer a new chapter in the artist's continuous quest to hold possibilities in balance, and they speak of his ever-evolving debate on what painting can aspire to be.

Known for his highly charged and evocative imagery, the paintings in Le Brun's *New Paintings* revolve around embedded and over-painted imagery. They propose a loaded abstraction. They depend on color, physicality of mark-making and surface as a thesis, and paths to eliciting painting's inherent poetry. As Le Brun states, "One of the characteristics of my work is the tension between revealing and covering. This can be just as potent psychologically as any narrative."

Le Brun's painting implies a wide cultural literacy, encompassing mythology, philosophy, and music; historical anecdote is often translated into emotive abstraction when in his hands. *Walton*, the seminal painting in the exhibition and a breakthrough moment for the painter, is indicative of this. Primarily crimson, with layers and veils of thick brushstrokes, the work suggests remnants, memories of concrete events and mystical allusions. Inspired by the composer Sir William Walton's opera *Troilus and Cressida* (written 1954) which Le Brun has always regarded as an insufficiently appreciated late Romantic masterpiece. Le Brun concedes that the name of the opera and its protagonists painted at the top and bottom of the canvas – in opposing halves- was the genesis of the painting. How these words came to disappear, Le Brun recalls: "My strength of feeling and sympathy for this artist's dilemma demanded that I paint it all out with red which seemed intuitively to be the right dramatic and affirmative response. In a sense - to hell with the naysayers, and hurrah for Romanticism, no matter how late."

Concurrent with the exhibition, Christopher's monumental new marble sculpture *Maro* will be included in the Sotheby's selling exhibition *Beyond Limits* at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire UK, from September 8-October 29.

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An illustrated monograph, *Christopher Le Brun: New Paintings: More Pomp! More Wonder!* (2014), with texts by artist and author Edmund de Waal, and art historian and curator David Anfam, published by Ridinghouse, London will accompany the exhibition.

About Christopher Le Brun

Born in Portsmouth, England and trained at the Slade and Chelsea Schools of Art in London, Christopher Le Brun appeared in many international group exhibitions, such as the influential *Zeitgeist* exhibition at the Martin-Gropius Bau, Berlin (1982). He became recognized as one of the leading young European painters. His work challenged the dominant and prescriptive influence of academic modernism. Central to his approach is a conviction in the power and problematic nature of imagery in painting, the potency of national traditions, particularly in his case English Romanticism, and the re-exploration of history, myth and symbolism as legitimate and natural subjects for ambitious painting. His work has been frequently connected with the Neo- Expressionists in Germany, the *Transavanguardia* in Italy, and new image painting in the USA.

Between 1990 and 2003, Le Brun served as a trustee of the Tate and subsequently of the National Gallery, a period which saw his involvement in the radical development of Tate at Bankside, Liverpool and St. Ives, as well as the master plan and re-development of the east wing of the National Gallery. He is a former trustee of the Dulwich Picture Gallery, a founding Trustee of the Prince's Drawing School, and serving Trustee of the National Portrait Gallery. He was elected President of the Royal Academy in December 2011, the youngest since Lord Leighton in 1878.

Le Brun is the recipient of numerous distinctions and awards. Among others, he participated in the Venice Biennale in 1982 and received the prestigious John Moores Prize in 1978 and 1980. In 2010, he was made an Honorary Fellow of the University of the Arts, London. Le Brun's works are included in museum collections worldwide, including: British Museum, London; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; Scottish Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, UK; Museum of Modern Art, NY; Tate Gallery, London, UK; Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT.

Christopher Le Brun lives and works in London.

About Friedman Benda

Founded in 2007 by Barry Friedman and Marc Benda, Friedman Benda exhibits artists and designers spanning three postwar generations to the present day. Active in both the primary and secondary markets, the gallery serves as a platform for artists' visions, with every exhibition purpose built and installed. Friedman Benda presents eight exhibitions each year, juxtaposing established with emerging artists, and is committed to introducing and fostering the awareness and expansion of artists on a global scale.

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