

Crown Point Press

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Matt Mullican: Represent the Work

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Crown Point Press announces the release of five new etchings by Matt Mullican. The New York-based artist came to San Francisco to work in the Crown Point studio for two weeks in early January of 2020. The resulting prints, Mullican explained, are like pages in a book, with the first print acting as the title or cover page. The phrase “REPRESENT THE WORK” is printed in capital letters banner-like above and below the central image in each print. As he pointed to a drawing study, the artist said, “Represent the work. This is my work. That’s what this is.” Mullican uses signs, symbols and colors as a system of order to illustrate the relationship between the actual world and its representation, and to make sense of the world that is around us. The gallery exhibition includes preparatory drawings, working proofs and ephemera presented together with the five new etchings in a layout designed by Mullican.

The first print, *REPRESENT THE WORK, Logo* has as its centerpiece a target printed in yellow, green, blue, and red. The other four etchings in the series are printed only in yellow and black. The colors Mullican chooses to use in his art refer to “The Five Worlds,” a cosmology he created. Its organizing principal is color and how it corresponds to different levels of perception. Green stands for the material world; blue represents everyday life; yellow refers to art, science and culture; black symbolizes language; and red refers to the subjective world. Mullican said, as he was working in the Crown Point studio, “Yellow is my color for the arts.” Much of the imagery in the prints recurs in the artist’s primary work, including a drawn cosmology, charts representing the city, the stick figure Glen (who represents Mullican himself and also a generic artist), and the alphabet. All these are parts of artist’s extensive visual language.

Matt Mullican grew up in Santa Monica and received his BFA from CalArts in 1974. Since the 1970s, he has created a body of work encompassing drawings, collage, photography, rubbings, sculpture, prints, and installations. He is often associated with the Pictures Generation, a group of artists that include Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, and James Welling. These artists came of age during the decade between 1974 and 1984, each exploring through different media how imagery shapes the perception of the world around them. In a 1980 essay in *Real Life Magazine*, artist and collaborator Allan McCollum describes Mullican’s work in this way: “His subject matter is not simply his feelings about life, but his coming to terms with the whole of his existence; in order to understand himself and the world he inhabits, he is working to reconstruct it in every aspect, piece by piece.”

Mullican has had solo exhibitions in many major institutions including the Dallas Museum of Art; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; Musée des Arts Contemporains, Grand-Hornou, Belgium; Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan; the Stedelijk Museum, Netherlands; the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and the de Young Museum, San Francisco. His works are held in the collections of the Tate Modern, London; the Art Institute of Chicago; The Museum of Modern Art in New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Cincinnati Art Museum; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., among others. He is represented by Peter Freeman, Inc., New York; Capitain Petzel, Berlin; Mai 36 Galerie, Zurich; and Mark Selwyn Gallery, Los Angeles. Matt Mullican lives and works in New York and Berlin.