

JOHN BERGGRUEN GALLERY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lee Mullican
Paintings 1952-1968

May 3 – June 2, 2007

John Berggruen Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings by the late American artist, Lee Mullican. *Lee Mullican: Paintings 1952-1968* will focus exclusively on his works on canvas from the years 1952 through 1968, marking a seminal period of production in Mullican's career. This exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue with an introduction by Jack Stauffacher, founder of the Greenwood Press and friend to the artist. There will be an opening reception held on Thursday, May 3, 2007 from 5:30-7:30pm.

Since he began painting in the late 1930s, Lee Mullican's work has remained notoriously difficult to pin down to any one particular genre. Mullican's art was influenced by everything he saw in the environment around him, by both the phenomenal and the mundane, and made no distinction in its depiction of the grandiose and minute components of existence. Additionally, he spent much of his life traveling. As a result, his paintings exhibit a distinct type of multifarious aesthetic that make them easily identifiable as Mullicans, yet increasingly elusive to define in terms of a specific artistic movement. Perhaps the most identifiable characteristic evident in all of Mullican's canvases is his preference for the printer's ink knife over the brush as a primary decorative tool - the effect of which can be seen in the sharp, repetitive, and obsessively applied lines of paint apparent in every one of the paintings included in this exhibition.

Lee Mullican: Paintings 1952-1968 represents a homecoming of sorts for the artist and his works to San Francisco. Three of the paintings highlighted in this exhibition and its accompanying catalogue - *Shatter Passage* (1963), *Sleeping Gypsy* (1965), and *Transfigured Night* (1962) - were included in the 1965 exhibition *Symbolist Painting by Lee Mullican* at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now San Francisco Museum of Modern Art). Mullican lived and worked in San Francisco for only a brief period of time (1946-1952), but it was a time of incredible artistic and philosophical development, during which Mullican played a major role in the foundation of the Dynaton movement alongside artists and like-minded thinkers Wolfgang Paalen and Gordon Onslow Ford. The Dynaton movement appropriated its name from the Greek word *dyn*, which means "that which is possible." According to Kimball Whiting, the goal of the Dynatons "was to forge an ever-expanding art rooted in the timeless." Although the group disbanded subsequent to their 1951 exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art, the goal of achieving timelessness in art remained paramount in Mullican's practice until his death and is palpable in the works on display at John Berggruen Gallery.

Lee Mullican was born in Chickasha, Oklahoma in 1919 and died in Los Angeles in 1998. He attended the Kansas City Art Institute after transferring from the University of Oklahoma in 1941. Upon his graduation from the Institute in 1942, Mullican was drafted into the army, serving for four years as a topographical draughtsman. Mullican traveled to Hawaii, Guam and Japan before ending his tenure in the army in 1946, when he moved to San Francisco. He moved to Los Angeles in 1952 where he joined the teaching staff of the UCLA Art Department in 1961, keeping his position for nearly 30 years. He divided the later part of his life between his homes in Los Angeles and Taos, traveling internationally and co-organizing exhibitions at UCLA. Mullican's works are included in the permanent collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well as in numerous other institutions.

For further information and photographs, please contact Ellen Mahoney at 415.781.4629 or ellen@berggruen.com.

Gallery hours: Monday - Friday: 9:30-5:30, Saturday: 10:30-5:00