

Fri Art Kunsthalle presents the First-Ever retrospective of the rediscovered American artist Gene Beery (*1937) with more than 40 works from 1960 to 2016.

Gene Beery is one of the first visual artists to use words and texts as the main content of his artworks as well as the inventor of the “Paintogram”, the term he coined to define his painted texts works.

This first institutional survey on the artist Gene Beery is accompanied by a monographic publication. It brings together more than 60 color images and exclusive essays by Kenneth Goldsmith and Jo Melvin.

For more than 60 years, Gene Beery (b. 1937) has interrogated, with humor and irony, the moment of aesthetic experience. What are the stakes of an encounter between a viewer and an artwork? What does the surface of the canvas promise to whoever looks at it? Beery positions himself with pictures to be read, whose phrases announce the arrival, the impossibility or the absurdity of such an experience. Behind the apparent nonchalance and sarcastic distance of his practice emerges a profound reflection on the existence of art and the role of the artist.

In 1960 the artist made his first text paintings, unclassifiable works at the intersection of Fluxus, Minimalism, neo-Dada and assemblage. Beery’s paintings are a blend of deadpan humour, anti-esthetism and attempts to reduce the art form to a written idea. Three years later he left New York, going into exile in the California mountains, where he has worked ever since, on the margins of the art world. There he makes an important shift towards idiosyncratic colorful pop paintings mixing both texts and images. If his first New York paintings took a true anti-painting stance, the artist extended the field of his practice, beginning in 1965, to a new kind of figuration inspired by vernacular esthetic. He thus anticipated painting’s many revivals in the decades that followed.

Artist Books

Oscillating between figurative phases, the production of artist’s books and manifest paintings and the invention of glossolalias and neologisms, he undertakes a tongue-in-cheek job and makes puns that mock artistic genius and high art. His unique approach resonates with the avant-garde movements—poetic and artistic—of the 1950s-1960s, and with the most current artistic practices.

Gene Beery is the first monograph dedicated to this American artist and offers an indepth

investigation of his work. It assembles more than 130 artworks and three essays, by the poet and cultural activist Kenneth Goldsmith, the critic Jo Melvin and Balthazar Lovay, as well as an interview with Gene Beery by Gregor Quack.

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