

GEORGE BLACKLOCK THE BODY SINGING

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Opening Reception Thursday April 26

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Flowers Gallery is delighted to announce a solo exhibition of paintings by British artist George Blacklock. Over several decades, Blacklock's works have been concerned with a balance of figuration and abstraction, responding to the body in both their subject matter and their methods of construction. His paintings reflect a sensitive response to phenomena in the surrounding world, from atmosphere and color to sound and music.

The paintings in the current exhibition represent Blacklock's pursuit of what he has termed "*the beauty of release; the joy of a kind of imagined freedom... of who you are behind closed doors.*" Blacklock compares his vigorous and intuitive working process to the acts of dancing or singing, a kinesthetic approach to painting where innate bodily knowledge is glimpsed through the act of making. The curvilinear shapes created by the sweep of the artist's brush or metal scraper across the surface of the canvas provide a record of the figure in movement, arranging the pictorial space of the painting in accordance with the physical gestures of the body.



Memory Box, 2017, Oil on canvas
60 1/8 x 71 7/8 in, 152.5 x 182.5 cm

Returning to abstraction in the early 1990s after a period of figurative painting, Blacklock remained committed to the traditional narrative structures of Western figurative art, sustaining what he has described as a conversational exchange with the 'ancestral voices' of art history. Often deriving new distilled configurations from pre-existing compositions (such as that of Michelangelo's *Pieta* sculptures), he developed a distinct lexicon of gestural motifs as way of maintaining a dialogue with the art of the past. Several compositions and motifs reoccur throughout the exhibition, such as a stacked, tapering cylindrical form; or twinned shapes that seem to remain separate or self-contained within their shared space. Blacklock's long-standing interest in the reiteration of form is grounded in the belief that repeated forms are never the same, taking on a nuanced, altered quality like an echo. The echo is referred to in the titles of several works, alongside references to mirroring and memory, suggesting an interest in the double that relates to notions of history. Blacklock has said: "*Echoes are all that remain of real experience.*"

Relationships to music or sound are located within both the rhythmic structure and in the titles of several works in the exhibition. Blacklock relates the painting *Birdsong at Dusk* to an encounter with the sound of a nightingale's song in an urban landscape – reminding him also of the sound of birdsong within the opening movement of Duke Ellington's *The Queen's Suite*.

Focused on a continued quest for discovery, rather than formal attempts at resolution, each canvas is the result of numerous adjustments, additions and sometimes total reconfigurations, the evidence of which can be seen in the haptic surface energy of his paintings. In *Line Through Chaos*, created over the period of 2003-17, the tension between the curling diagonal form cutting across the canvas and the 'chaotic' atmospheric space beyond, reflects Blacklock's interest in disturbing the sense of order in his paintings to reveal something formerly unseen. He says: "*De Kooning's concept of 'slipping glimpses' is very important to me as a painter. It is the painter's lot to cover up something really interesting with some dumb idea and only glimpsing the former, in the act of the latter. You then have to find it again. With luck the re-finding of that idea leads on to a better idea.*"

For further information and images please contact Allegra Favila, allegra@flowersgallery.com or +1 212 439 1700.

ABOUT GEORGE BLACKLOCK

George Blacklock was born in 1952 in County Durham, England. He studied at Sunderland Polytechnic for one year before going on to study painting at Stourbridge College of Art in the early 1970s, and completed his Masters at Reading University in 1976. Blacklock was the Dean of Chelsea College of Art and Design, London from 2011- 2017. He has exhibited extensively in Europe and North America throughout his career and his work is in major public collections including the Arts Council of Great Britain. He has received awards from the Welsh Arts Council; the Greater London Arts Association; and was a prize winner at the John Moores contemporary painting competition in 1993. His book *Colour and Abstraction* was published by The Crowood Press in the UK in 2015. A two-person exhibition of paintings and photographs by George Blacklock and actor, filmmaker and photographer Gary Oldman was presented at the Museo De Las Artes, Guadalajara and Flowers Gallery London, exploring the mutual creative threads connecting their distinct artistic practices.

NOTES TO EDITORS

All images © George Blacklock, courtesy of Flowers Gallery London and New York.
Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm



Clockwise from left: *Birdsong at Dusk*, 2006, Oil on canvas, 32 1/8 x 37 5/8 in, 81.5 x 95.5 cm; *Echo Visit*, 2017, Oil on canvas, 40 1/8 x 50 in, 102 x 127 cm; *Line Through Chaos*, 2003-17 Oil on canvas, 60 x 72 in, 152.5 x 183 cm.