



For immediate release

VW (VeneKlasen/Werner) is pleased to announce “Self-Consciousness,” a project co-curved by artist Peter Doig and writer Hilton Als.

“Self-Consciousness” is a group exhibition exploring the history and evolution of the portrait. Juxtaposing modern and contemporary artists, be they established, unknown or “outsider”, Doig and Als establish a cross-generational dialogue among artists and the viewer as a means to investigate the nature of portraiture, and to question more broadly certain perceived hierarchies in painting. While “Self-Consciousness” is dominated by painting, Doig and Als have also included film portraits of a kind, the better to reflect the relationship between an “old fashioned” medium, such as painting, and how it’s influenced the seventh art.

A key figure in “Self-Consciousness” is the late Trinidad-born portraitist Boscoe Holder (1921–2007). Self-taught and painting from the age of five, Holder was also a choreographer and dancer who taught at the University of the West Indies. In his work as a painter, Holder not only recorded the vibrancy of his West Indian culture, but its not infrequent social and political isolation as well. Are the relatively unknown Holder’s paintings as “great,” or insightful, as established masters like the subjective social realists Alice Neel and Marsden Hartley? And how, as viewers, do we contribute to a painting’s meaning and thus significance?

“Self-Consciousness,” is as much a series of proposals or questions as it is a mirror reflecting how we do and do not see ourselves in the context of art. What does it mean for the subject to not only display their physiognomy—an aspect of their being—but for the artist to interpret it? Similarly, what does it mean when we, potential subjects all, “decide,” to present one of our various selves to the world? And how much of that self does a portrait—a series of subjective brush strokes—reflect of the artist, let alone the subject’s work?

“Self-Consciousness” is Doig and Als’ second collaboration. Their first was a series of lectures and conversations about film that was part of the 2009 Trinidad Film Festival. Hilton Als previously worked with artists Justin Bond and Darryl Turner on installations for La Mama Annex, Feature Inc. and Simon Watson in New York City, where Als is based. A staff writer for The New Yorker magazine, Als’ work also appears in The New York Review of Books. Peter Doig lives and works in Trinidad and has exhibited his work throughout Europe and the US. In 2008-2009 a major survey of his paintings was shown at Tate Britain, Musee d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, and Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt.