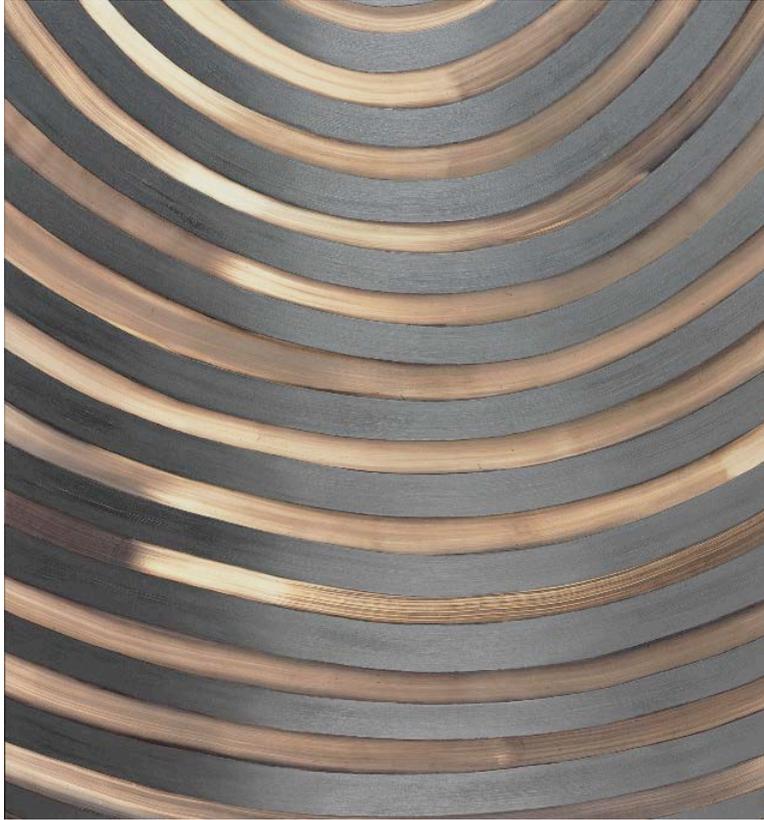


LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

**ROSS BLECKNER**  
***FOREVER OVERHEAD***

April 29 – June 15, 2016



Ross Bleckner, *Dome*, 2015

Opening Reception: Friday, April 29, 6-9pm  
Leila Heller Gallery, I-87 Alserkal Avenue, Al Quoz 1, Dubai, UAE

DUBAI, UAE—Leila Heller Gallery Dubai is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by Ross Bleckner from April 29<sup>th</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The artist's first major exhibition in the region features ten large-scale paintings as well as smaller canvases, wherein according to the artist, "the architecture of place meets the architecture of the sky", revealing phenomena of paint and light, in an oeuvre teetering between a call for salvation and a silent abyss.

Ross Bleckner's paintings are mediations on light: at once natural and artificial, an effect of and the very substance of the work. Often composing works replete with a pathos of loss, this light puncturing sheets of darkness represents a cautious optimism—a kind of hope—or an aesthetic of, as he states, "an idealistic dystopia." The artist continues, "it is about dredging ... finding light through the darkness."

It's this philosophical query around the physical and the absent that animates Bleckner's dome series. "The surface quality of the paintings," he explains, "lets you look back into the world. It's about the

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alchemy of the surface. The reality of it is somewhere in the paintings, but the configuration takes you away from that. There's a tension between the materiality, the physicality, and the sublime."

Central to the artist's practice is a methodological layering of paint onto the canvas then scraping it away—a perpetual process of creating and editing, adding and subtraction. "I paint," he explains, "the way one constructs a building." He achieves a depth of color by slowly, gradually layering paint onto the canvas. The elimination of color is also central to Bleckner's work. For example with his series of bird paintings, at one point in the creative process, the canvasses are entirely covered in paint—until Bleckner carves the birds out of the layers of paint. "So the birds are not actually there on the canvas. They are literally gone."

This oscillation between the transcendental and the quotidian, illusionist space and the assertive presence of surface, the interruptive event of light and an encompassing blanket of dark contrast marks a speculative oeuvre wherein doubt and a questioning of the human condition in relation to the possibility of redemption or a divine is central.

## About the Artist

Ross Bleckner (b 1949, New York) received a Bachelor of Arts from New York University in 1971, a Master of Fine Arts from Cal Arts in 1973, and currently teaches at New York University. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum held a major retrospective of his works in 1995. Works by Bleckner are held in esteemed public collections around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Not only has Bleckner had a profound impact on the shaping of the New York art scene, but he has also enjoyed a philanthropic career. For ten years, Bleckner served as president of the AIDS Community Research Initiative of America (ACRIA), a non-profit community-based research and treatment education center. More recently, he has been working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Northern Uganda. In May 2009, Bleckner was awarded the title of Goodwill Ambassador by the United Nations. The artist lives and works in New York.

## About the Gallery:

Since its establishment over three decades ago in New York, Leila Heller Gallery has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting creative dialogue and exchange between Western artists and Middle Eastern, Central and Southeast Asian artists. It has garnered a reputation for identifying and cultivating the careers of artists leaving a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture. Currently representing a diverse roster of Western and Middle Eastern artists, the gallery is also active in the American, European and Middle Eastern secondary art markets.

In November 2015, Leila Heller Gallery opened its first international location in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. At 14,000 square feet, the state of the art gallery features three exhibition spaces, making it the largest gallery in the UAE. Showcasing leading regional and international artists, many of whom will be presenting their work in the Middle East for the first time, the gallery is dedicated to supporting the evolving practice of established artists.

## For Press Inquiries:

For more information and images, please contact Brooke Lynn McGowan, [brooke@companyagenda.com](mailto:brooke@companyagenda.com) or Jolaine Frizzell, Leila Heller Gallery, [jolaine@leilahellergallery.com](mailto:jolaine@leilahellergallery.com)