

# *THE DOG BENEATH THE SKIN*

NEW PAINTINGS BY  
**LEON POZNIAKOW**

Thursday 4th - Monday 22nd February 2016

Private View: Thursday 4th February, 7-10pm

Open Saturday, Sunday, Monday 11am-6pm or by appointment



MERCER CHANCE is proud to present an exhibition of new paintings by Leon Pozniakow.

Produced over a period of two years, these works began to take shape during a teaching residency in an arts university near Delhi in 2014. This deeply transformative experience has not only lent the works a new aesthetic confidence expressed through vibrant colour and impeccable design, but also has forced a radical reconsideration and consequent strengthening of Leon's conceptual framework and personal philosophy.

Emerging as autobiographical statements through observation and imaginative contemplation, the works are developed over a long period in the studio, resulting in a suite of mythic narratives. From the rich variety of imagery in all the paintings our abiding feeling is one of love; open, warm, unashamed and courageous.

Working in a new cultural environment, Leon was careful to avoid a fetishistic use of the exotic, yet his approach has undeniably been inspired by the different qualities and conventions that exist within Indian art. These influences combine with his love of Western painting, from Baroque allegory to post-modern multiplicity, from Titian and Poussin to Picasso and Kitaj. Rather than a crude farrago of 'East meets West' styles, we see a totally natural whole; a series of paintings that feel considered and bravely structured whilst being nuanced, intimate and un-self-conscious.

It could be said that as a homosexual, one experiences an inner exile, to be an 'other', displaced even within one's own society. In this respect, Leon can be seen as a Diasporist painter, an approach that, in the terms of R.B Kitaj, is "enacted under peculiar historical and personal freedoms, stresses, dislocation, rupture and momentum. The Diasporist lives and paints in two or more cultures at once". The Diasporist recognises memories, events and beliefs as "sacred dreams for painting, and so the mode of [their] life is translated into pictures".

Sexuality is a central concern of Leon's practice, so it was refreshing for him to experience arts from the Hindu tradition, which sanctified the sexual aspect of the human, embracing sex as spiritual transcendence. Indian art suddenly made apparent the nihilistic, pornographic and futile use of sexuality by artists like Jeff Koons and John Currin, whose work operates through shock and confrontation; possible only in reaction to the post-Christian puritanical hangover that pervades Western thoughts about sex. This encouraged Leon to re-evaluate how he used sexual imagery in his work to avoid the gratuitous; every part of these paintings is pregnant with meaning and his subjects are explored with good humour and seriousness in balance.

**Mercer Chance Gallery,  
253 Hoxton St, N15LG**

info@mercchance.co.uk  
www.mercchance.co.uk

02070336559  
07415134155