

Philip Hanson

Gridded Ether

November 9 - December 15, 2019

François Ghebaly is proud to announce *Gridded Ether*, Chicago-based painter Philip Hanson's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles.

Across fifteen shaped canvases, the exhibition delves into Hanson's unique combination of poetry and painting. Each canvas contains the entirety of a poem, committed in luminous, layered verses across the surface and structured to incite a particular way of both reading and seeing the text. Poems by Emily Dickinson, William Blake, Walt Whitman and William Shakespeare make appearances.

Hanson transforms the poems by visualizing their lines in startling and idiosyncratic arrangements that guide the reading eye in curlicue paths up, down, and across the surface of the painting. At times, letterforms gather their own weight and objecthood. Elsewhere, they adorn flowing banners, Grecian columns, and grand marquees. The pictorial space occupied by the poems' texts equally recalls opera proscenia, store window displays, circus posters, and Piranesi etchings. Lodged across vibratory layers, the words achieve a nearly sonic visuality, whispered or howled as determined by their relative size and compositional placement. As the poet John Yau has noted, it is when Hanson "absorbs the poem's diagrammatic possibilities into a pictorial possibility that he attains another level, and becomes in effect a visionary painter."¹

These works are the newest in a body of powerful text-based paintings that originated in the mid 1990s. Earlier in his career, Hanson was closely associated with the Chicago Imagists, exhibiting in groundbreaking exhibitions like *The False Image* at the Hyde Park Art Center in 1968 together with Christina Ramberg, Roger Brown, and Eleanor Dube. Yet despite drawing on classic Imagist strategies such as appropriating the formal elements of commercial advertising and popular illustration, Hanson has enduringly forged his own path. The singularity of his vision and the remarkable alchemy with which he combines his visual and linguistic forebearers are both on full display in *Gridded Ether*.

Philip Hanson was born in 1943 in Chicago, Illinois. He holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he also taught painting from 1973 to 2013, and his studies also included humanities at the University of Chicago and architecture at the University of Illinois Chicago. Since first exhibiting in the trailblazing Hyde Park Art Center exhibition *The False Image* in 1968, he has exhibited in numerous group and solo museum exhibitions, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. His recent gallery exhibitions also include Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago; Karma International, Zurich, Switzerland; and James Cohan, New York. His work is held in the public collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Illinois State Museum, Springfield, Illinois; Museum of Modern Art (Mumok), Vienna, Austria; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and the National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC. In 2014 his paintings were shown in the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He lives and works in Chicago.

1 Yau, John, "Late Bloomer: Philip Hanson's Recent Paintings." *Hyperallergic*, April 13, 2014.