

PAULA COOPER GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BEN ESTES, ALAN SHIELDS

529 W 21st Street

April 19—May 12, 2018

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 19, 6-8pm

NEW YORK – Paula Cooper Gallery is pleased to present *Ben Estes, Alan Shields* opening April 19 at 529 West 21st Street. This is the fifth in a series of two-person shows at Paula Cooper Gallery's 529 West 21st Street space curated by Laura Hunt, the gallery's archivist. There will be an opening reception on Thursday, April 19 from 6 to 8pm.

On view by Alan Shields, an artist admired in his lifetime for his exuberance and authenticity, are several works made of acrylic painting on canvas tubing stretched over tall metal pipes. In 2016 Carter Ratcliff wrote of the pieces: "It may be that we'll never come up with a satisfactory name for [Shields'] pipe and canvas works. That's frustrating. Thinking depends on categories. Rather than linger over this frustration, however, it's better to experience the power of these works to provide space with focus, and with their color patterns, to subtly inflect the spatial surround."¹ The artist's titles, too— *The Top is Not Here, Dreams in Colors, Ten Begin Again*—toy with the limitations of naming: like nonsense verse or New York School poetry, they are both hyper-specific and open to wildness.

Ben Estes, a poet, editor, and artist, is exhibiting large paintings on paper. With Amish quilts, concrete poetry, and Quakerism as points of reference, the works channel written language through the ideographs of the heart and the checkerboard. For Estes, who recently moved from New York City to upstate New York, the heart symbol on social media became a prominent if not primary mode of connecting to friends in the city. The artist found himself integrating the hearts tapped on his phone into his paintings; what results are surreal structures of digital affirmations woven into his visual stream of poetics.

Alan Shields (1944, Herington, KS – Shelter Island, NY, 2005) exhibited with Paula Cooper from 1968-1991. His work has been exhibited widely nationally and internationally and is included in the collections of Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Tate Collection, London, UK; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. Selected museum exhibitions include: *Alan Shields: Protracted Simplicity (1966-1985)*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO (2016); *Alan Shields: In Motion*, Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY (2015); *Into the Maze*, SITE Santa Fe, NM (2014); *Stirring Up the Waters*, Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY (2007); *Alan Shields: A Survey*, The Beach Museum of Art, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS (1999); *1968 – 1983: The Work of Alan Shields*, Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis, TN (1983), traveled to Lowe Art Museum, Coral Gables, FL and Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; and *Alan Shields: Paintings and Prints*, Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA (1981). The Alan Shields Estate is represented by Van Doren Waxter (New York, NY).

Ben Estes (b. 1977, Normal, IL) is a poet, editor, and painter living in Kingston, NY. He is the Founding Editor of the publishing company that he runs with Alan Felsenthal, The Song Cave. Publications of his own writing include *Illustrated Games of Patience* (The Song Cave, 2015), *Eight Poems* (Engineered Garments, 2012), *The Strings of Walnetto Arrangements* (Flowers and Cream, 2011), and *Announcement for a Poem*, a collaboration with Kim Gordon and Rick Myers (Flying Object, 2012). Estes holds an MA in Art History and an MFA in Painting from University of Iowa, and an MFA in English from UMass Amherst. *Ben Estes, Alan Shields* marks the first time in over a decade that Estes exhibits his paintings.

For more information and images, please contact the gallery: (212) 255-1105; info@paulacoopergallery.com

¹ Aspen Art Museum, *Alan Shields: Protracted Simplicity, 1944-2005*, (Aspen, CO: Aspen Art Press, 2016), 47.