

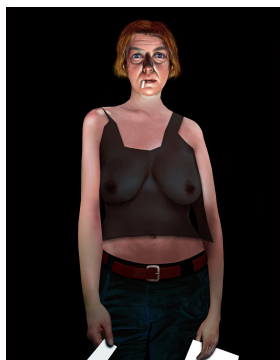
# BRUCE SILVERSTEIN

## Alfred Leslie

### *The Toast Is Burning*

September 22 – November 12, 2016

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 22, 6-8pm



Bruce Silverstein Gallery is pleased to present *The Toast Is Burning*, the gallery's first exhibition with Alfred Leslie. This show features new work by this accomplished and influential American artist, alongside a selection of his iconic, large-scale portraits from the 1960s.

Since the 1940s, Alfred Leslie (b.1927) has been celebrated for his achievements in film, painting, drawing, and poetry, including early recognition for his paintings featured in the Kootz Gallery exhibition *New Talent*, 1950, curated by Clement Greenberg and Meyer Shapiro, and the historic *9th Street Exhibition* of 1951. As a filmmaker, Leslie is most known for his groundbreaking films *Pull My Daisy*, 1959, and *The Last Clean Shirt*, 1964, with text by Frank O'Hara. Leslie's artist/writer collaborative magazine *The Hasty Papers*, 1960, which included contributions from John Ashbery, Jean Genet, Jack

Kerouac, Alice Neel, and others, was a creative affront to the art world's emphasis on discipline specificity.

Despite much exposure and praise for his abstract paintings and films, by the mid-1960s Leslie devoted himself entirely to realist painting. This set him apart from his peers and made him a leader in the return to representation in American painting. This transition also identified core precepts of Leslie's creative interests—his prioritization of narrative, acceptance of artifice, and the development of what he called a confrontational style of portraiture. This phase of the artist's career culminated in *The Grisailles Paintings*, 1960s-1990s; *The Killing Cycle* and *Act and Portrait*, 1960s-80s; and the watercolor series *100 Views Along The Road*, 1966-1983.

Leslie once again is a pioneer. His recent works, termed *Pixel Scores* by the artist, are digitally painted portraits of characters from literature—ranging from Benito Pérez Galdós' 1887 novel *Fortunata and Jacinta*, to Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from The Goon Squad*, 2010, and Rachel Kushner's *The Flamethrowers*, 2013—comprising a larger series entitled *50 Characters in Search of a Reader*. In his recent interview with Phong Bui of the Brooklyn Rail, Leslie states:

There's a straight line from my post abstract paintings to the *Pixel Scores*...The *Pixel Scores* are not better because I do it this way—they're just different in that it's my way. We all work to put together the discontinuities of the things that we see all the time...I like to think of everything as automatic artifice, from images greatly disproportionate in scale to kitschy images of marshmallow clouds and whatnot, it's all intermingled in these *Pixel Scores*. It's all complete artifice, bound together—I hope—by first-class formal attributes.

Alfred Leslie was born in the Bronx, NY, in 1927. After military service in World War II, Leslie studied art from 1946 to 1947 with Tony Smith and William Baziotas at New York University. Leslie has been exhibiting his work since 1947. His circle of friends and collaborators is diverse and comprised of the leaders in American poetry, film, painting and photography. Leslie's multi-disciplinary approach continues to challenge historians and critics who prefer to neatly categorize artists and movements. A tragic fire in 1966 forced him to cancel a mid-career retrospective at the Whitney Museum. Prior to the fire, Leslie's radical shift in technique from abstraction to realism paved the way for other realist painters like Philip Pearlstein, Chuck Close, and Alex Katz to find a place in American art after Abstract Expressionism. His work is in the collections of museums worldwide, and he is the recipient of numerous grants and awards including an Artists Foundation Grant, a Guggenheim Foundation Grant, a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, and a Medal of Merit from The American Institute of Arts and Letters. One of his works is included in the National Film Archives.

Please contact the gallery at [inquiries@brucesilverstein.com](mailto:inquiries@brucesilverstein.com) or 212.627.3930 for more information.

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Upcoming: John Wood  
November 17, 2016 – January 14, 2017  
535 W 24<sup>th</sup> Street