

# THE MAYOR GALLERY

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*For immediate release*

## Billy Apple® New York 1970–75

10 September – 26 October 2013

A second solo exhibition by Billy Apple will run at The Mayor Gallery from 10 September – 26 October 2013. This follows on from the 2010 exhibition, *Billy Apple®: British and American Works 1960 – 1969* where significant Pop Art works were reintroduced to London.

*Billy Apple®: New York 1970 – 75* moves forward to focus on Apple's shift to a thoroughly dematerialised art practice. It features works that operate in the 'negative condition' as evidence of his art/life dialectic—photographic documentation of various subtractive actions, the sequential dissolution of his 'self-elimination' self-portraiture and short typed up ambivalent statements. In many ways, Apple's proto-conceptual works from the early 1960s in London anticipate this engagement with idea over object.

The works have not been seen together in London since they were presented in *From Barrie Bates to Billy Apple 196 – 1974*, the notorious 1974 survey exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery. Within a couple of days of opening, the Metropolitan Police's Obscene Publications Unit, acting on complaints from the public, temporarily closed the exhibition. They required the offending works—*Body activities*; *3. Masturbation*, a series of 65 semen filled tissues dating from 1970 to 1973—to be removed before allowing the show to reopen. The exhibition includes a representative photo-document of the offending items.

In 1969, the artist opened Apple at 161 West 23rd Street, one of the six not-for-profit spaces that established New York's Conceptual Art movement. It is within these



a series of subtractions and eliminations, cleansing tasks that in their reductive aesthetic purity anticipate what Brian O'Doherty will identify in 1976 as the determining frame for contemporary practice in his seminal essay, *Inside the White Cube*.

In the *Negative Cleaning Conditions* series, Apple's legendary microscopic gaze (where he sees more of less) combined with his compulsion to clean, edit back and remove is utterly thwarted when he covers his good right eye with an eye patch—he has 70% vision loss in his left eye. "I had to work very hard trying to define the edges of the tiles or assess if the glass was really clean. I had to use means other than visual to judge."

Joseph Beuys' *Ausfeigen* [Sweeping Up] on 1 May 1972 bears a superficial resemblance to Apple's sweeping activities, *Roof Dirt 1 May 1970* and *Roof Dirt 1 May 1971*. Uncannily, this work followed Apple's two actions, which were—like Beuys'—consciously carried out on Labour Day. However Beuys' motivation is political, a tool to galvanise discussion about Marxist ideology; whereas in 1970, Apple swept his roof in a private process to measure and compare the mess of the city.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated publication that includes an essay by art historian Christina Barton, titled *Billy Apple—"In the Area of the Negative Condition"; Cleaning and Other Subtractions, New York 1970 – 75*. Christina has written extensively on various aspects of the artist's career.

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### Visitor Information

Mon-Fri 10am-5.30pm; Sat 12pm-3pm - Admission: Free  
Nearest Tube Station Green Park or Piccadilly Circus

### Press enquiries:

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