

Gene Beery (b. 1937, Racine, Wisconsin) is a critically important conceptual artist based in Sutter Creek, California. His singular, eccentric practice—first developed in the late 1950s in New York—presaged much of the language-based explorations of the second half of the 20th century.

For two years, Beery worked as a security guard at the Museum of Modern Art, where “some of the Cezanne pictures, if you watched them long enough, they'd move.” At the museum he also encountered a young night clerk called Sol LeWitt, who would later become his most loyal patron and collector. After fielding praise from Max Ernst, securing an award from the William and Norma Copley Foundation, and realizing an exhibition at the important Alexander Iolas Gallery, he left New York for Northern California in 1963. “I used to tell people that my trip to New York drove me sane,” Beery once noted. “Not insane, sane.”

In 1970, he was included in a pair of exhibitions in Seattle and Vancouver organized by Lucy Lippard. Titled after the human populations of both cities, the presentations were milestones in the history of conceptual, process, and land art. Beery was also featured in the 1975 Whitney Biennial alongside Scott Burton, Miyoko Ito, Allen Ruppersberg, and many others.

Beery's earliest works on canvas are post-modern reflections on the nature of art, the role of the artist, and the razor's edge between success and failure. Mid-career efforts feature inside jokes, outside koans, and obliquely aspirational proclamations as if drafted by a gifted, wayward sign painter. Later works, many of which include pithy and poetic slogans atop crudely rendered t-shirts, cut to the quick of what it means for an artist to make their mark, if only for one extraordinary and pathetic sweep across the canvas.

*New Mythic Visualizations* presents an overview of Beery's gregarious, trailblazing, and under-known painting practice alongside videos featuring the “Logoscape Ranch,” the family compound in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas where the artist has lived and worked for over 40 years. While Beery has recently had solo exhibitions in Switzerland, Germany, and Los Angeles, this is his first in the Bay Area since 1970, when he worked as a Yellow Cab driver in San Francisco.

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