

BIENNALE ARTE
2017



la Biennale di Venezia

57. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte



SHORT GUIDE

MCARTHUR BINION

Born in 1946 in Macon, Mississippi (USA)
He lives and works in Chicago, Illinois (USA)

McArthur Binion found painting through words and a chance encounter with art. After studying creative writing and anthropology, he moved to New York at the age of 19 and worked as an associate editor in Harlem. One of his jobs was to deliver the organization's newsletter to the president of the Museum of Modern Art. He saw painting and sculpture in the museum setting for the first time, and discovered Malevich, Picasso and Wifredo Lam. Binion decided to study art and after training in life drawing for two years, he entered the Cranbrook Academy of Fine Arts in Michigan. He was the first African-American to graduate from the school, which honored him this year as one its most distinguished alumni. In 1973 he moved to New York and was invited by Irving Sandler to participate in the inaugural exhibition of Artists' Space in a show curated by Carl Andre, Sol Lewitt and Ronald Bladen. In the early nineties he moved to Chicago and while teaching at Columbia College, in relative isolation from the art public, developed his emotionally-based abstract paintings.

Since 2013 Binion has been producing paintings he titles *DNA Series*, which now include *DNA: Black Paintings*, *DNA: White Paintings*, *DNA: Seasons*; and most recently *DNA: Sepia*. Geometrical rigor and the mechanical application of matter in accordance with a minimalist structure of verticals and horizontals reveal, to the attentive eye, photostats of his birth certificate, pages from the single address book he kept from the seventies to the nineties and most recently, photographs of his birth house in Mississippi. As the artist says, "[his] work is the geography and anthropology of [his] biography." Though abstract in form, the paintings reflect Binion's experience: his childhood in the rural South, living in a two room house, with eleven siblings, moving to Detroit, and being part of the nascent art community in New York. "I'm making abstraction personal. It's taken me 15 years to learn how to do it. Painting and sculpture is an old man's game. To call yourself an artist, you have to earn it," explains Binion. **M. S.**



McArthur Binion, *DNA: Study: Zero*, 2014.
Oil paint stick and paper on board,
213.4 x 213.4 cm. © McArthur Binion