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Robert Fishko, *Director*

CRAIG MCPHERSON

(b. 1948)

American

Craig McPherson was born in Wichita, Kansas in 1948. After receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Kansas in 1970, he spent the following years curating and lecturing for the National Endowment for the Arts, before taking up residence in New York in 1975 to develop a career as an artist.

During the late 70's and early 80's McPherson concentrated on New York City landscapes, primarily at night, creating a series of paintings and prints in the rare graphic medium of mezzotint, a printmaking technique that produces velvety black areas and tonal shifts derived from painstakingly roughening and burnishing a copper plate to prepare it for the ink. One of his most iconic images is *Yankee Stadium at Night*, inspired from his studio view in Washington Heights at the northernmost tip of Manhattan. His work has been described as "cinematic" – the night scenes likened to film noir. One curator, describing work from this period, wrote "McPherson is almost literally 'sculpting with light'."

In 1983, McPherson had his first one-man exhibition at the A.M. Sachs Gallery on 57th Street in New York, where *The New York Times* critic Grace Glueck likened his paintings to those of the 17th Century Dutch master, Philip de Koninck. This body of work led to a major corporate art commission from the American Express Company for two monumental mural projects at their corporate headquarters in the World Financial Center (WFC), New York. The two commissions were completed by Craig McPherson over a seven-year span from 1985 to 1992.

The first commission was a 90-foot mural cycle of four oil paintings, to be installed in the American Express auditorium at WFC. The series, *Twilight: The Waterways and Bridges of Manhattan*, is comprised of four panels that include views of the Hudson River, Harlem River, East River and the New York Harbor.

In January 1987, McPherson began work on the second mural cycle, *Harbors of the World*, for the American Express lobby. This vast undertaking produced ten oil on linen paintings totaling over 11 feet high and 318 feet long. The project involved working on site for 14 months in the harbor cities of New York, Venice, Istanbul, Sydney, Rio de Janeiro and Hong Kong, followed by four years of studio work in New York. They are

referenced in a new book, *Art in Public Places: New York's 50 Best*, by David Masello. Amazingly, both murals survived the tragic events on September 11th and remain on permanent display. Other major commissions by McPherson include a site-specific painting commissioned by MBIA in Armonk, NY (1992), and mezzotint editions commissioned by The Cleveland Museum of Art Print Club (1997), and the New York Print Club (2008-09).

McPherson has received many solo exhibitions in New York and group exhibitions all over the world. In 1998, he had his first museum retrospective at The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge University, England, which traveled to Glasgow, Scotland. In 2008, The Frick Art and Historical Society in Pittsburgh mounted their one-person exhibition, *Steel: Pittsburgh Drawings by Craig McPherson*. Works by the Artist were included in the British Museum's first contemporary art exhibition, *The American Dream: Pop to the Present*, which traveled from London to the Terra Foundation for American Art in Paris. McPherson was most recently included in special anniversary group exhibitions at The Frick Art Museum in Pittsburgh (2020) and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (2021).

Craig McPherson is represented in many museum, corporate and private collections in the U.S. and abroad. These include The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The British Museum, London; The Art Institute of Chicago; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Boston Public Library; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Cleveland Museum of Art; Detroit Institute of Art; The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England; Hunterian Gallery of Art, Glasgow; Library of Congress; National Museum of American Art; Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC; New York Historical Society; Museum of the City of New York; Whitney Museum of American Art; Wichita Art Museum; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; and many smaller city and university collections. Corporate collections include Alliance Capital, Bank of America, Chase Manhattan Bank, Citicorp, Dreyfus, Exxon, General Electric, Marsh McLennan, MBIA, Microsoft Corporation, Salomon Brothers, and Wrigley's Inc.

Craig McPherson has received several grants and awards from institutions such as the National Endowment for the Arts (1984), National Academy of Design (1987), American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1983 and 1989), and The Frick Art Museum (2006-2008). Exhibition reviews have been written in *The New York Times*, *The Financial Times*, *Artnews*, *The New York Post*, *The Observer*, and others. McPherson currently works and resides in Virginia and is represented by Forum Gallery.