

**William Wegman: *A Number of Problems***

March 9–April 22, 2023

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 9, 6–8 PM

Level Two

Magenta Plains is pleased to present *A Number of Problems*, William Wegman's second solo exhibition with the gallery. The exhibition consists of a selection of new paintings which continue to build on the artist's interest in language and word games. Since the 70s, Wegman has been known for his deadpan logic; videotaping, photographing, painting and drawing everyday scenes in such a way as to reveal some inherent absurdity: spilled milk licked up by his dog Man Ray until his nose hits the camera, a painting inspired by Turner that can be turned, one dog walking another. This approach remains central to the work.

The pictorial logic of the paintings in this new body of work is often unclear, not offering any interpretation of why or what has occurred. The architecture of everyday life is depicted in varying degrees of wreckage: buildings upended, facades cascading, bits of roofing airborne, exterior siding ripped open to reveal interior walls and everything in between, inside and outside simultaneously visible. This dismantling of structures brings to mind the architectural interventions of Wegman's contemporary Gordon Matta Clark, yet the resulting level of chaos leaves behind any possibility of a manageable conceptual intervention. Small phrases inserted throughout these paintings in Wegman's characteristic handwriting further complicate their reading. In *Beach House* (2021), the crumbled structure is clearly labeled "Beach House" and at the bottom of the image, the words "JPG 3600" lets us know that what we are looking at is a painting of an image on a computer.

William Wegman's artistic practice spans photography, video, painting, drawing, and writing, and has been a cornerstone of the New York art scene and pop cultural environment for decades. In the words of curator and critic Andrew Lampert, "For many around the globe, he is the iconic Weimaraner photographer, but those in the know have long recognized Wegman as one of conceptual art's most prodigious practitioners." Wegman's unique blend of humor, wry wit, and a deeply considered aesthetic sensibility have helped maintain the relevance of all aspects of his practice into the present moment.

William Wegman (b. 1943, Holyoke, MA) received a BFA from the Massachusetts College of Art, Boston and an MFA from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. His work has been exhibited extensively in both the United States and abroad, including solo exhibitions at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1982); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1988); Whitney Museum of American Art (1992); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2001); and The Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2002). The retrospective *William Wegman: Funney/Strange* was held at the Brooklyn Museum, and traveled to the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; the Norton Museum of Art, Palm Beach; the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover; and Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus (2006-07). In 2018, the Metropolitan Museum of Art organized *Before/On/After: William Wegman and California Conceptualism*. In 2018-2021, *William Wegman: Being Human*, a large-scale survey exhibition of Wegman's photographic work, traveled to venues including Palais de L'Archevêché, Arles; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Christchurch Art Gallery, New Zealand; MASI, Lugano; Photomuseum den Haag, The Hague; and Seoul Arts Center, Seoul, Korea. Wegman's work is in many important public collections including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Monographs by Wegman include *William Wegman: Paintings* (Abrams, 2016) with essays by Martin Filler, Amy Hempel, Robert Krulwich and Susan Orlean and *Being Human* (Chronicle/Thames and Hudson, 2017) edited by William Ewing. His most recent publication, *William Wegman: Writing by Artist* (Primary Information, 2022), edited by Andrew Lambert was accompanied by exhibitions at Sperone Westwater Gallery, NY and Marc Selwyn Fine Art, LA in the spring of 2022. William Wegman lives and works in Maine and New York.

The artist and gallery would like to thank Sperone Westwater Gallery for their cooperation in the presentation of this show.