Gagosian, Emma Cline, and Peter Mendelsund Collaborate on Picture Books: A Book Series That Pairs Fiction Writers with Leading Contemporary Artists

Inaugural Publication Brings Together Author Ottessa Moshfegh and Artist Issy Wood; Second Book Features Author Percival Everett and Artist Richard Prince

NEW YORK, November 17, 2021—Gagosian is pleased to announce Picture Books, a new imprint launching in December that publishes fiction by leading authors alongside contributions by celebrated contemporary artists.

The series was conceived by Emma Cline, author of The Girls (2016) and Daddy (2020), who has invited a number of internationally renowned fiction writers and visual artists to collaborate on individual books. Each author is paired with an artist, who is given carte blanche to create an image that is in conversation with the writer’s story. The book and image—in the form of a printed poster—are packaged together in limited hardcover editions designed by Peter Mendelsund, the renowned author, designer, and creative director of The Atlantic. The books will be available for purchase for $30 in the recently relaunched online Gagosian Shop as well as at the physical location on Madison Avenue in New York and at select bookstores. Future authors in the series will include Mary Gaitskill and Elif Batuman.

Larry Gagosian commented: “My gallery has long published books on artists by celebrated writers and thinkers. When Emma Cline approached me about creating an imprint that would invite artists to create new images in response to works of literature, it immediately resonated. Bringing creators together in this unique way adds another dimension to the gallery’s innovative and expansive publishing program.”
Emma Cline added: “Picture Books creates a space for a new kind of dialogue between art and fiction. While writers often engage with art and artists in the form of a catalogue essay or a critical review, there was no equivalent platform for artists to respond to a work of fiction. Gagosian was the ideal partner in bringing this project to life: the gallery has a strong appreciation for the echoes and illuminations that result from conversations between different mediums and between artists. Peter Mendelsund was another natural fit: across his fiction, nonfiction, and visual work, Peter is always thinking deeply about the interplay between words and images. It’s exciting to create the opportunity for that interplay in the form of these beautiful objects.”

Peter Mendelsund said: “As someone who has spent much of his adult life making pictures and writing books, I’m naturally invested in understanding the intersection of these two media (and interested in understanding the limits of each: what can’t words show, and what can’t art say?). So, when Emma and I first started discussing the Picture Books series, in which we’d pair fiction and fine art, I found myself tickled in my sweet spot. Seeing the two forms side by side, responding to one another, will be revelatory in speaking to exactly these intersections and limits.”

The Picture Books series will launch with two publications—Ottessa Moshfegh’s My New Novel (2021), matched with an artwork by Issy Wood; and Percival Everett’s Grand Canyon, Inc. (2021), accompanied by a Richard Prince artwork. Wood’s contribution is The down payment (2021), a new oil-on-linen painting; Prince presents a color photograph from his Original Cowboys series (2013).

“You think everyone hates you, Jerome. It might be the one thing you’re getting right.” In Moshfegh’s acerbic narrative, My New Novel, struggling writer Jerome Littlefield trades verbal blows with his mother; his therapist; and Stacey, a pregnant stripper who responds to his appeal for an “attentive individual to sit and listen. No speaking required.” The painting that Wood produced in response portrays a weeping Jerome in the midst of what the artist calls “the most directly surreal part of the story.” The pairing of Wood and Moshfegh was an obvious one, says Cline. “Both Moshfegh and Wood share a gothic, spiky humor and an attunement to the darker currents of the world, the hidden realms where shame and desire intersect.”

Everett’s Grand Canyon, Inc. relates the tragicomic tale of crack rifle shot Winchell Nathaniel “Rhino” Tanner; his sidekick Simpson Trane, aka BB (named for the BB pellet lodged inextricably in his skull); and their battle to “acquire” the Grand Canyon by constructing an amusement park on Plateau Point. Prince’s photograph, which depicts the sandstone buttes of Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park on the Arizona-Utah border, sees the artist continue his long engagement with the iconography of the American West. For this series, instead of rephotographing and manipulating images clipped from magazine advertisements, as he has done before, Prince visited the area to seek out quintessential viewpoints established by preceding photographers. “Prince is so wily and wry, in ways that echo Everett,” says Emma Cline. “They are both tricksters who take a sideways look at the mythology of the West and reveal it anew.”

Gagosian’s extensive in-house publishing program has produced nearly six hundred books, including catalogues raisonnés, artist monographs, scholarly exhibition catalogues, and limited-edition artist’s books. The gallery started publishing in 1985 and today its output rivals that of traditional arts trade publishers, averaging between twenty-five and forty books a year. Recent subjects include Georg Baselitz, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Helen Frankenthaler, Ellen Gallagher, Katharina Grosse, Damien Hirst, Donald Judd, Y.Z. Kami, Nam June Paik, Gerhard Richter, Jenny Saville, Mary Weatherford, and Rachel Whiteread. The gallery also produces Gagosian Quarterly, a celebrated print and online magazine, which will launch its fifth anniversary issue at the beginning of 2022.

Emma Cline is a novelist from California. Her debut novel, The Girls (2016), was shortlisted for the John Leonard Prize by the National Book Critics Circle and the Center for Fiction’s First Novel Prize. Her stories have been published in the New Yorker, Tin House, Granta, and the Paris Review, and her short-story collection, Daddy, was released in 2020. Cline was named one of Granta’s Best of Young American Novelists and was a recipient of the Plimpton Prize for Fiction.

Percival Everett is the author of twenty-two novels and four collections of stories. Among his novels are The Trees (2021), Telephone (2020), So Much Blue (2017), and Erasure (2001). He has received
awards from the Guggenheim Foundation and Creative Capital. He is a distinguished professor of English at the University of Southern California and lives and works in Los Angeles.

**Peter Mendelsund** is the author of five books: the novels *Same Same* (2019) and *The Delivery* (2021), as well as the nonfiction works *What We See When We Read* (2014), *Cover* (2014), and *The Look of the Book* (2020). Mendelsund has been described by the *New York Times* as “one of the top designers at work today,” and his work has been described by the *Wall Street Journal* as “the most instantly recognizable and iconic.” He is creative director of *The Atlantic*.

**Ottessa Moshfegh** is a novelist from New England who lives and works in Southern California. *Eileen* (2015), her first novel, was shortlisted for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Man Booker Prize and won the PEN/Hemingway Award for debut fiction. *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (2018) and *Death in Her Hands* (2020), her second and third novels, were *New York Times* bestsellers. She is also the author of a novella, *McClue* (2014), and the short-story collection *Homesick for Another World* (2017).


**Issy Wood** was born in the United States and lives and works in London. She graduated from Goldsmiths, University of London, with a BA in fine art and history of art in 2015, and earned an MA from the Royal Academy Schools, London, in 2018. Collections include the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; and Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris. Exhibitions include *All the Rage*, Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, London (2019); and *Good Clean Fun*, X Museum, Beijing (2020).

*PictureBooks*