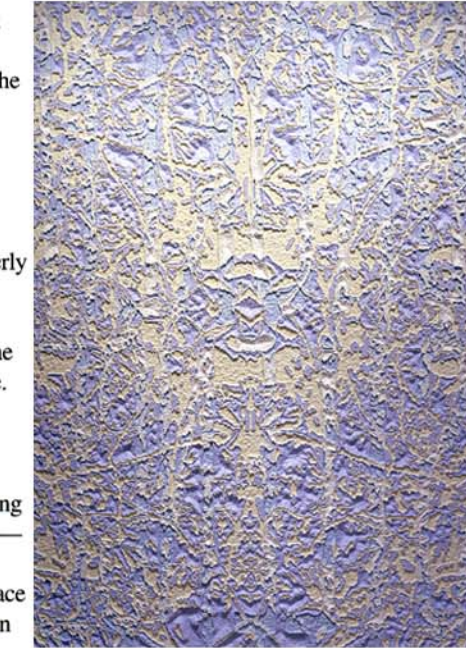


Helguera, Pablo. "Bruce Pearson."  
*Tema Celeste* XVIII, no. 84 (March-  
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## Bruce Pearson

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, **New York**

For all the impact they have on us at a first sight, Bruce Pearson's paintings are surprisingly elusive. Entering the gallery, the viewer is immediately confronted by the powerful intensity of color and texture in Pearson's work. But it is precisely that intensity which acts as a temporary veil to more subtle tensions, which are perceived only gradually. Pearson's works play cleverly between extremes: although paintings in theory, they have a decidedly sculptural quality, evoked by the massive nature of the styrofoam slabs from which they are made. The technique Pearson applies is not dissimilar to that of a woodcarver. Each image initially seems to be a single work. However, after a time—as with the changing reflections on the surface of moving water—we encounter a fierce debate between two sides: a landscape fights against a flat surface and vice versa. One image can only be seen if we mentally remove the presence of the other. The most important aspects of Pearson's work are easily missed at first glance. It is only on closer examination that the hidden texts in each of the paintings start to emerge. Although it could be argued that a painting is ultimately a four-dimensional piece—since, like any other artwork, it is also experienced in time—our understanding of Pearson's work can only truly occur over time, as our eyes slowly adjust to the forms and colors, and we draw on the mental process through which we turn symbols into language and language into meaning. While a child is learning to read, at a certain point single words begin to make sense in groups and form phrases. The effect with Bruce Pearson's work is similar: initially illegible, enigmatic Rorschach texts, they challenge us to discover their meaning. Later they start to unfold, and the texts—which are in fact the titles of the works—can finally be deciphered. Once we have read the words—which make provocative declarations such as, "I am lonely without my pain" or "Ecstatic explosions of romantic love,"—a whole new series of associations are triggered off in our minds as we stand before Pearson's paintings: meanings surfacing from the quicksand.



**Bruce Pearson,**  
*Broken Silence,*  
2000, oil and acrylic  
on styrofoam,  
244 x 180 x 15 cm.  
Photo by John Lamka.

**Pablo Helguera**