Mel Bochner
Illustrating Philosophy

By John R. Stomberg and Thomas E. Wartenberg

What would a visual image of a philosophical idea look like? Aren't philosophical concepts, by virtue of their very abstractness, incapable of being rendered visually? These are some of the questions raised in this catalogue of an exhibition at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Mel Bochner: Illustrating Philosophy, which examines a specific project by the renowned conceptual artist. Curator and author Thomas E. Wartenberg explores Bochner's prints and drawings inspired by the writings of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, a suite of which was published as illustrations to the 1991 Arion Press edition of On Certainty. Through his sensitive analysis, Wartenberg shows how Bochner translates Wittgenstein's revolutionary claims about knowledge and doubt into visual images. Bochner's work presents an important corrective to a view of book illustrations as a crutch for understanding an author's meaning. Illustrations, in fact, can provide an alternative means of access to complex, even abstract ideas.

This book will interest an academic audience, particularly in the areas of philosophy, art and art history, linguistics, and word and image studies.