

Serpentine Gallery

Press Release

Richard Hamilton: Modern Moral Matters 3 March – 25 April 2010

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To start its 40th anniversary year, the Serpentine Gallery presents *Richard Hamilton: Modern Moral Matters*, a solo exhibition by one of the world's most respected living artists. This will be the first major exhibition of Hamilton's work in London since 1992.

Hamilton has embraced many different mediums since the 1950s, including painting, printmaking, installation and industrial design. The exhibition will reassess the nature of this British artist's pioneering contribution, taking as a starting point the artist's political works.

The installations, prints and paintings in this exhibition take global politics, riots, terrorist acts and war as their subject matter, examining how these conflicts are now largely mediated by the media, often via television or the internet. From the ironic *Swingeing London 67* to the requiem-like *Kent State* and his more recent portrait paintings, Hamilton has continued to capture the media's hunger for images, while also transforming these images into a more permanent form.

Hamilton has seen great changes in communication technologies throughout his working life. In 1969, he noted that: "In the Fifties we became more aware of the possibility of seeing the whole world, at once, through the great visual matrix that surrounds us, a synthetic 'instant' view. Cinema, television, magazines, newspapers flooded the artist with a total landscape."

Through its fragmentation of images, manipulation of space and reference to different styles and genres, Hamilton's work interrogates the representations that surround us. Yet his analysis of the image is counterbalanced by an underlying, allegoric lyricism, through which he reinvents the genres of portraiture and history painting.

Hamilton's oeuvre has evolved throughout his long and influential career, particularly in his approach to processes and techniques. The exhibition will explore in depth his use of multiples, and the varied ways the artist has used photographic material to investigate representation in contemporary society.

The exhibition is curated by Julia Peyton-Jones, Director, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Co-Director, and Sophie O'Brien, Exhibition Curator, Serpentine Gallery.

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Richard Hamilton

Richard Hamilton, born in 1922, was a leading instigator of Pop Art in Britain in the 1950s. He studied at the Royal Academy Schools from 1938 until it closed for the war in 1940. Too young for conscription, he was sent by the Ministry of Labour to be trained for nine months to become a draughtsman. He then worked in an armaments factory until he was able to return to the Royal Academy Schools when it reopened in 1946. He later studied at the Slade School of Art. His first solo show was held in 1950 to critical acclaim and he subsequently went on to exhibit widely, becoming one of the most significant artists working in the UK. Hamilton was a key member and exponent of the Independent Group, formed in the 1950s by a group of artists and writers at the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

Hamilton taught at the London Central School of Arts and Crafts and the University of Newcastle upon Tyne; he gave up teaching full-time in 1966. Always engaging with a wide range of technological processes within his art, Hamilton began creating computer generated works in the 1980s. He has had a long career as a printmaker and in 1983 won the World Print Council Award. Retrospective exhibitions of Hamilton's work have been held in the UK at the Hanover Gallery (1964), the Tate Gallery (1970 and 1992), and most recently at Inverleith House in Edinburgh (2008). Hamilton was Britain's representative at the 1993 Venice Biennale. He participated in the Serpentine Gallery's *Interview Marathon* (2006) and *Manifesto Marathon* (2007).

Serpentine Gallery 40th Anniversary

2010 is the Serpentine Gallery's 40th anniversary year. The Gallery first opened to the public in May 1970, with an exhibition of post-diploma work from Chelsea, Manchester and Birmingham Colleges of Art. Since then, it has shown the work of a wide range of international artists, including John Baldessari, Matthew Barney, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Louise Bourgeois, Sophie Calle, Willem de Kooning, Thomas Demand, Fischli/Weiss, Dan Flavin, Alberto Giacometti, Gilbert & George, Robert Gober, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Arshile Gorky, Antony Gormley, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Howard Hodgkin, Rebecca Horn, Runa Islam, Jasper Johns, Ilya & Emilia Kabakov, Ellsworth Kelly, Karen Kilimnik, Jeff Koons, Barbara Kruger, Yayoi Kusama, Maria Lassnig, Brice Marden, Agnes Martin, Gordon Matta-Clark, Henry Moore, Shirin Neshat, Chris Ofili, Eduardo Paolozzi, Cornelia Parker, Richard Prince, Gerhard Richter, Bridget Riley, Ed Ruscha, Richard Serra, Cindy Sherman, Tilda Swinton, Cy Twombly, Mark Wallinger, Rebecca Warren, Gillian Wearing, Rachel Whiteread, and Jane and Louise Wilson, among many others.

In 2000, the Serpentine Gallery launched its Pavilion commission, an ongoing programme of temporary structures by internationally acclaimed architects and designers who, at the time of the Serpentine Gallery's invitation, have not completed a building in England. The Pavilion architects to date are: Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, SANAA, 2009; Frank Gehry, 2008; Olafur Eliasson and Kjetil Thorsen, 2007; Rem Koolhaas and Cecil Balmond, with Arup, 2006; Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura with Cecil Balmond, Arup, 2005; MVRDV with Arup, 2004 (un-realised); Oscar Niemeyer, 2003; Toyo Ito with Arup, 2002; Daniel Libeskind with Arup, 2001; and Zaha Hadid, 2000. Unique worldwide, the Pavilion programme provides a peerless model for commissioning architecture.

The Serpentine Gallery remains free of charge, seven days a week. It now attracts up to 800,000 visitors in any one year, and its programme has four established strands: Exhibitions, Architecture, Education and Public Programmes.

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Images

www.serpentinegallery.org/press

Press View

There will be a press view for *Richard Hamilton: Modern Moral Matters* from 10am to 12pm on Tuesday 2 March. Please RSVP to press@serpentinegallery.org

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Nearest Tube: South Kensington or Lancaster Gate

Gallery open 10am to 6pm daily. Admission free