

Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert

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SPACE, SPEED, SEX

Exhibition of Pop Art from the 1960s by Gerald Laing
15 November – 8 December 2006

***Space, Speed, Sex* will be a major retrospective of work from 1962 to 1969 by pop art pioneer, Gerald Laing. Two exhibitions will run concurrently: a loan exhibition of about 25 paintings and drawings will be held at Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert, 38 Bury Street, St James's, London SW1 and a selling exhibition of the artist's prints to include graphic works and multiples will be held at Sims Reed, 23a St James's Street, London SW1. Both exhibitions will demonstrate Laing's acute engagement with popular culture of the time and reinforce the artist's reputation as a major contributor to the 1960s pop scene, a reputation which has, in the past, been overlooked.**

The shows will capture the diversity of Laing's artistic output during this period, ranging from earliest works (1962-63) and his engagement with French mass media images of femme fatales, *Brigitte Bardot* (1963) and *Anna Karina* (1963) to his later series influenced by American popular culture, including astronauts, skydivers, bikini girls and dragster racing. The two exhibitions present an unprecedented opportunity to view the artist's prints alongside his paintings and sets up an interesting dialogue between the different mediums.

Gerald Laing (b 1936, Newcastle-upon-Tyne) was a student at St Martin's School of Art from 1960 to 1964 and some of his best known images were painted while still at art school. In 1963 Laing held his first exhibition at St Martin's entitled '*Paintings of Photographs/Photographs of Paintings*' in which he exhibited *Brigitte Bardot* (1962) for the first time, a painting which has since become one of the most enduring pop images of the 20th century.

During his first trip to New York in 1963 he met Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Jim Rosenquist, who were themselves just emerging as important artists. He spent that summer working for Robert Indiana in his loft on Coenties Slip and on the strength of this he was invited to work and exhibit in New York straight after leaving art school, where he spent the rest of the 1960s, painting and exhibiting frequently, virtually as an American artist.

In 1964 Laing held his first one-man show in New York at Richard L. Feigen & Co, a gallery which specialised in showing the work of British pop artists. For the remainder of the 1960s he showed regularly in Feigen's three galleries in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. Laing was invited to show at the American pavilion at the 1967 Sao Paulo Biennale in Brazil and it was during this period that the Whitney Museum of American Art acquired one of his works, thus categorising him at that time as an American artist.

For Laing, the perfected images of subjects exclusive to American popular, often suburban, culture – such as stars and starlets, drag racers, astronauts and skydivers – embodied an iconic individuality which flourished under the aegis of the American Dream, a dream which was sustained only until the nemesis of the late 1960s demonstrated its fragility.

Notes to Editors:

Exhibition hours: Monday – Friday, 9am – 5.30pm. Two fully illustrated colour catalogues accompany the exhibition. Admission is free.

Background on the artist:

Gerald Laing was born in Newcastle in 1936. He studied painting at St Martin's School of Art, London, between 1960-1964. After graduation he moved to New York and lived in America until 1969. During this time he exhibited at the Feigen galleries in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. He was artist-in-residence at the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, Colorado (1965). He returned to the UK in 1969 where he renovated the ruined Kinkell Castle, near Dingwell, where he has lived ever since. He continued his close ties with the USA and was Visiting Professor of Painting and Sculpture at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque (1974-5). He taught sculpture at Columbia University in New York in the mid 1980s. In 1975 he established a bronze foundry in order to cast his own work at Kinkell Castle with assistance from the late George Mancini. His numerous public commissions include Callanish at Strathclyde University, Glasgow (1971); The Frieze of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, George Street, Edinburgh (1979); The Fountain of Sabrina, Broad Quay, Bristol (1981); The Conan Doyle Memorial, Picardy Place, Edinburgh (1989); Axis Mundi, Tanfield House, Edinburgh (1990); Ten Dragons, Bank Underground Station (1994); Four Rugby Players, Twickenham Stadium, Middlesex (1995); Portrait bust of Sir Paul Getty, The National Gallery, London (1996); The Wormsley Cricketer (1997) and The Wormsley sundial (2000) at Wormsley Cricket Ground, Buckinghamshire; The Cover Drive, Lords Cricket Ground (2002); Falcon Square Mercat Cross, Inverness (2003).

(ENDS)

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"SPACE SPEED AND SEX" is the title of a performance work and exhibition of paintings which Gerald Laing presented at the ICA in 1964, at which many of these images were for the first time exhibited".