

GOLDSMITHS CCA

PRESS RELEASE
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How Chicago! Imagists 1960s & 70s

15 March – 26 May 2019

Preview: 14 March 2019, 6PM – 9PM

Press View: 14 March 2019, 9AM – 12PM

RSVP for press view essential: rachel@suttonpr.com



Gladys Nilsson, *A Cold Mouth*, 1968 © the artist. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York

Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art presents ***How Chicago! Imagists 1960s & 70s***, 15 March – 26 May 2019, the first significant UK exhibition in almost 40 years of work by the group of artists who have become known as the Chicago Imagists. The exhibition focuses on 14 artists highlighting their individual styles as well as their shared references and moments of connection through painting, objects, drawings, prints and ephemera. Co-curated by Sarah McCrory (Goldsmiths CCA) and Rosie Cooper (De La Warr Pavilion), and organised by Hayward Gallery Touring, Southbank Centre, the exhibition travels to De La Warr Pavilion, 15 June – 8 September 2019.

Having mostly studied in proximity to one another at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago throughout the 1960s, the artists in this show share an enthusiasm for Surrealism, Art Brut, comic books, non-Western and 'self-taught' artists, commercial advertising and the music, markets, sideshows and architecture of the city they lived in. They learned from teachers at the School of The Art Institute, such as **Ray Yoshida**, and in turn their teachers learned from them. In 1966, **Jim Falconer, Art Green, Gladys Nilsson, Jim Nutt, Suellen Rocca** and **Karl Wirsum** first presented their works together at the Hyde Park Art Center in Chicago under the name of the *Hairy Who*. Following the show's success, the Hyde Park Art Center staged a series of similar exhibitions in the years that followed, bringing together new constellations of artists under names such as

Nonplussed Some, The False Image, Marriage Chicago Style and Chicago Antigua. The strong bonds developed between these artists during the 1960s and 70s has kept them affiliated under the moniker 'Chicago Imagism', despite the diversity of their work. *How Chicago!* will focus on works produced in those pivotal decades, a vital period in the development of these artists' practice.

Between 1966 and 1969, the Hairy Who artists self-published four comic books as an affordable way of creating full-colour, printed accompaniments to their exhibitions that were more fitting to the artists' aesthetic than a standard catalogue. These publications featured hand-drawn reproductions of the works on display, comic strips, fake advertisements and lots of puns, highlighting the humour and entertainment value which is so prevalent throughout *How Chicago!*

A critique of gender normativity and stereotyping is a theme which runs throughout many of the artists' works. **Christina Ramberg's** fascination with the female body is apparent in the repeated motifs of disjointed bodies in which flesh and fabric appear to merge within her paintings. Ramberg's journals and source images reveal formal interests in the bandaged bodies of medical illustrations, and the drapes and folds of clothing in Renaissance imagery. This interest for Ramberg began when she was a young girl and witnessed the dramatic transformation her mother would undergo as she prepared for a night out, using makeup and corsetry to alter her face and figure. **Suellen Rocca's** work also hints at notions of femininity with pastel-coloured, fleshy female forms rendered indistinguishable from the objects with which they interact. In the context of advertising, Rocca's work can be seen as a comment on the problematic depictions of women and feminised objects within society.

The 14 Imagists in *How Chicago!* are united by humour and fondness for wordplay, bringing to the surface all that is funny, popular, ridiculous as well as grotesque, vulgar and serious. This exhibition gives UK audiences the chance to see an incredible and hugely influential body of work which has been rarely seen outside the USA. At a moment when many contemporary artists are reconnecting with ideas around imaginative figuration, this exhibition provides a vital and inspirational touch-point for emerging artists and the public alike.

This exhibition is organised by Hayward Gallery Touring in collaboration with Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art and De La Warr Pavilion. *How Chicago!* is curated by Sarah McCrory, Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, and Rosie Cooper, De La Warr Pavilion.

A fully illustrated exhibition catalogue will be produced by Hayward Gallery Publishing, including essays by the curators and Lynne Warren, Curator at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and texts on each of the artists.

How Chicago! is supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art as part of Art Design Chicago, an initiative exploring Chicago's art and design legacy.

Sarah McCrory, Director at Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, and curator of the exhibition said: *This exhibition came together through an affection for the artists that Rosie and I share. We have approached this exhibition as fans. For me, showing this work within the context of Goldsmiths CCA, a university gallery, highlights the impact of the collegiate and sometimes competitive relationships spawned at art school, how those early relationships are the grounding of an artist's future career, and how shared ideas and influences can unite a diverse group of artists.*

Rosie Cooper, Head of Exhibitions at De La Warr Pavilion and curator of the exhibition said: *I am thrilled to be bringing such a significant exhibition to the De La Warr Pavilion this summer. The vibrancy, humour and inventiveness of each artist's work will be an inspiration to our visitors. At a time when artists are considering the creative possibilities of life and work outside London, it is especially relevant for a cultural institution such as ours to be presenting works by a community who developed such a strong sense of identity in Chicago, America's so-called 'Second City'.*

Full list of artists: Roger Brown, Sarah Canright, Jim Falconer, Ed Flood, Art Green, Philip Hanson, Gladys Nilsson, Jim Nutt, Ed Paschke, Christina Ramberg, Suellen Rocca, Barbara Rossi, Karl Wirsum and Ray Yoshida.

NOTES TO EDITORS

GOLDSMITHS CCA
St James'
New Cross
London SE14 6AD

Wed 11am–6pm
Thu 11am–9pm
Fri–Sun 11am–6pm

@goldsmithscca

For more information, please visit www.goldsmithscca.art

Tour details

15 March – 26 May 2019 Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, London
15 June – 8 September 2019 De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea

About Goldsmiths CCA

Goldsmiths CCA is a new public art gallery opened in September 2018 designed by Turner Prize-winning architects Assemble and located on the campus of Goldsmiths, University of London. It will build upon the university's reputation for artistic excellence and host world-class exhibitions, projects and residencies by national and international artists.

About De La Warr Pavilion

De La Warr Pavilion is one of the most significant modernist buildings in the UK designed by Erich Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff. It opened in 1935 as a progressive democratic space for community, culture and the arts, and continues to be so, with 400,000 visitors annually.

About Hayward Gallery Touring

Hayward Gallery Touring is the UK's largest and longest-standing not for profit organisation producing exhibitions of modern and contemporary art that tour to galleries, museums and other publicly funded venues throughout Britain. Funded by Arts Council England and based at Southbank Centre, London, Hayward Gallery Touring collaborates with independent curators, artists, writers and galleries to create ambitious exhibitions that are beyond the scope of a single institution. Ranging in scale from the British Art Show – the largest exhibition of contemporary art produced in the UK – to smaller monographic shows, our imaginative exhibitions are seen by up to half a million people in over 40 cities and towns each year.

About The Terra Foundation for American Art

The Terra Foundation for American Art is dedicated to fostering exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States for national and international audiences. Recognizing the importance of experiencing original works of art, the foundation provides opportunities for interaction and study, beginning with the presentation and growth of its own art collection in Chicago. To further cross-cultural dialogue on American art, the foundation supports and collaborates on innovative exhibitions, research, and educational programs. Implicit in such activities is the belief that art has the potential both to distinguish cultures and to unite them.

About Southbank Centre

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 17 acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. Southbank Centre is home to the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. For further information please visit www.southbankcentre.co.uk.

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