

Mat Collishaw

25 September 2015 – 10 January 2016

Floors 3 and 4

Preview: Thursday 24 September 2015, 6-8pm

The New Art Gallery Walsall is delighted to present a major survey exhibition by British artist Mat Collishaw, his largest UK show to date and his first in a UK public venue for over ten years. The exhibition will testify to the richness and breadth of Collishaw's practice and will include sculpture, photography, film and installation. Concurrent with his exhibition in Walsall, Collishaw will be presenting a specially commissioned work at the Library of Birmingham (18 September – 10 January), inspired by the Library's renowned photography collections.

Mat Collishaw is fascinated by the darker side of human nature. He has never shied away from difficult or challenging subject matter yet images that deal with death, destruction and decay are revealed as beautiful, hypnotic and compelling. In Collishaw's world, seduction meets repulsion, the shocking becomes alluring, the beautiful becomes squalid and desire meets pain. As an artist, he is only too aware of the power of the image to manipulate and he draws his inspiration from a range of sources such as the slick world of advertising, the rich seams of art history, television, the media and popular culture, nature, mythology and the proliferation of images available through the internet. In pursuit of his distinctive conceptual language, he appears to move seamlessly between media and techniques, embracing both old and new technologies.

A major new work, *All Things Fall* (2014), will be shown in a darkened space on Floor 4. The work is based on the story of the *Massacre of the Innocents*, a Biblical story of infanticide by King Herod to avoid losing his crown. The tale has provided dramatic subject matter for artists throughout history including Rubens, Reni, Giotto and Tintoretto. Collishaw combines the old technology of the form of a zoetrope, an early means of presenting the illusion of a moving image, with new technologies to design and create the work. All of the 300 characters and architecture have been designed in the 3D Max programme and then printed as 3D models in resin. The circular sculpture rotates at speeds so high that the static scenes become suddenly animated. In this frantic and detailed scene, the eye struggles to focus on one point. It is constantly urged to move on and explore the multiple bodies in various contortions. This is, in part, why Collishaw approaches the subject in the form of a zoetrope as this proto-cinematic optical illusion engages and seduces the viewer before they fully realise they are complicit in a scene of genocide. Its visual similarities to the form of a carousel allude to leisure and entertainment yet the cycle of characters present a frenzied orgy of violence.

In another ambitious installation, *Deliverance* (2008), repeated projections onto walls coated in phosphorescent paint present ghostly figures that appear suddenly and then slowly fade, only to be replaced by another. Drawing on the news coverage of the 2004 Beslan siege, Collishaw makes reference to the seemingly insatiable appetite of the press for images of disaster and trauma and of the complex and often ambivalent ways in which we as viewers respond to these distressing scenes.

Last Meal on Death Row, Texas (2011) is a stunning series of photographs, presented in the manner of Flemish still life painting. Such paintings often acted as a *memento mori*, a reminder of the inevitability of death and the transience of life on earth. For these works, Collishaw researched the last meals requested by prisoners on death row prior to execution.

The exhibition also includes works from the photographic series' *Single Nights* (2007), *Insecticides* (2006-ongoing) and *Catching Fairies* (1996) as well as the sculptural series *The Venal Muse* (2012) in which brightly coloured flowers, presented in vitrines, reveal on close inspection evidence of disease and decay. Influenced by Baudelaire's book of poetry, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), these works comment on man's disregard for nature and the environment and the spectre of genetic manipulation.

Throughout his practice, Collishaw cleverly draws the viewer in with his seductive and compelling works, only to challenge us to look beneath the surface where darker and more malevolent forces are at play.

The New Art Gallery Walsall and The Library of Birmingham have jointly commissioned a limited edition print to both celebrate and raise income for both projects. The prints are priced £195 + VAT (unframed) and can be purchased from the Gallery Shop or via email, telephone or our website:

info@thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk

01922 654400

www.thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk/visit/gallery-shop

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Notes to Editors

National and International Press Enquiries:

Toby Kidd toby@blainsouthern.com 0207 493 4492

Regional Press Enquiries:

Chris Wilkinson wilkinsonc@walsall.gov.uk 01922 654416

About Mat Collishaw

Mat Collishaw (b. 1966) received his BFA from Goldsmiths College, London, in 1989 and began his career exhibiting the acclaimed work *Bullet Hole* alongside his Goldsmiths contemporaries at the legendary show "Freeze" in 1988, and at "Modern Medicine" in 1990. Both shows were curated by Collishaw's long-term friend Damien Hirst and are renowned for the rise to prominence of the YBAs (Young British Artists).

Mat Collishaw is represented by Blain|Southern and his work has been exhibited in numerous solo shows around the world, including: *Black Mirror*, Galleria Borghese, Rome (2014), *Mat Collishaw: Afterimage*, Arter, Istanbul (2013); *Mat Collishaw*, Pino Pascali Museum Foundation, Bari (2013); *Mat Collishaw*, Bass Museum of Art, Florida (2013); *Retrospectre*, BFI Southbank, London (2010); *Hysteria*, Freud Museum, London (2009); Museum of Contemporary Art, Warsaw (2000); Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna, Italy (1999); *Life/Live*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville, Paris and The Brooklyn Museum, New York (1998).

Blain|Southern, Other Criteria and Thames & Hudson have published books with Collishaw's work and he won XVI edition of the Pino Pascali Prize in July 2013. The artist lives and works in London.

About The New Art Gallery Walsall

The New Art Gallery is run and maintained by Walsall Council and also receives significant financial support from Arts Council England.

Open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 5pm; Sundays 12 – 4pm. Closed Mondays and Bank Holidays. Admission to the gallery is free.

For more information visit thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk



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