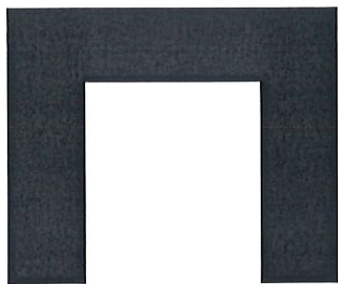


CASTELLO DI RIVOLI

MUSEO D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA

Piazza Mafalda di Savoia - 10098 Rivoli (Torino) - Italia
tel. +39/011.9565222 – 9565280 fax +39/011.9565231
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Exhibition	<i>The Painting of Modern Life</i>
Curator	Ralph Rugoff
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Press Preview	February 4, 2008, 11.30 a.m.
Opening	February 5, 2008, 7.00 p.m.
Dates	February 6 – May 4, 2008
Hours	Tuesday → Thursday 10.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m. Friday → Sunday, 10.00 a.m. – 9.00 p.m.
Entrance	€ 6.50 full price, € 4.50 reduced price
Location	Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Piazza Mafalda di Savoia – 10098 Rivoli (Turin)
Education services and public programs	Education Department ph. +39/011.9565213 – fax +39/011.9565232 e-mail: educa@castellodirivoli.org
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PRESS RELEASE

The Painting of Modern Life

Curated by Ralph Rugoff

Dates: February 6 - May 4, 2008

Press preview: Monday, February 4, 2008 - 11:30 a.m.

Castello di Rivoli is presenting a large group exhibition that addresses one of the most fascinating and controversial aspects of the visual arts: the use of the photographic image in pictorial language. The theme of the use of photographic images in painting is central to contemporary art history, both in relation to the development of the visual arts in a conceptual direction, and in terms of the revival of the image in recent art movements. The exhibition, curated by Ralph Rugoff, Director of The Hayward in London, focuses on the international evolution of painting over the last forty-five years, as seen through seventy-nine works by twenty-two European, American and Asian artists. The exhibition, installed in the large space of the Museum's Manica Lunga, begins with works inspired by photography from the 1960s, ranging from Gerhard Richter to Vija Celmins, from Malcolm Morley to Michelangelo Pistoletto. Anticipating fundamental concepts of present-day art, the paintings in the exhibition reveal the artists' desire to find a third way between avant-garde modernism and forms of realistic representation. Traditional characteristics of painting, such as gesturalism and brushwork, are combined with codes of photographic representation to create compositions that subvert preconceptions about both expressive means. The works in the show indicate how, through their relationship with photography, painters intended to reestablish a relationship between art and everyday life, politics and free time, urban life and current events. The exhibition considers how an image evolves when it is transposed from one language to another (from photography to painting), what elements remain constant and what aspects are distinct, or in what way the language connotes the significance of the image. The exhibition includes works by Richard Artschwager, Robert Bechtle, Vija Celmins, Peter Doig, Marlene Dumas, Thomas Eggerer, Judith Eisler, Franz Gertsch, Richard Hamilton, Eberhard Havekost, David Hockney, Johannes Kahrs, Johanna Kandler, Martin Kippenberger, Liu Xiaodong, Malcolm Morley, Elizabeth Peyton, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Gerhard Richter, Wilhelm Sasnal, Luc Tuymans and Andy Warhol. In conjunction with the exhibition, a catalogue will be published by Skira, Milan, with approximately 200 pages of illustrations and essays by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Martin Herbert, Ralph Rugoff, Barry Schwabsky and Kaja Silverman.

The Painting of Modern Life

The Painting of Modern Life explores the relationship that exists between painting and photography today. The exhibition brings together the paintings by twenty-two artists from the early 1960s onwards. All of the paintings exhibited here were inspired by photography and explore themes of contemporary existence – politics and history, work, leisure and everyday life, social space, family and friends, and modern individuals.

The birth of photography in the mid-1800s played an important role in the shift from academic history painting towards the depiction of the real world in which the artists and their public lived. In his essay *The Painter of Modern Life*, which appeared in *Le Figaro* in 1863, Charles Baudelaire wrote, "The lover of universal life enters into the crowd as if into an immense reservoir of electricity." The French poet urged the modern painter to take the fleeting and changing life of the city as his subject matter. In the nineteenth century - at the birth of an era that later came to be known as the 'age of spectacle', when the world was only just beginning to be flooded with photographic images - artists celebrated in their paintings the 'instantaneousness of life' captured by the photograph.

By the early 1960s, around 100 years after Baudelaire's essay was published, an entire generation of artists looked towards photographic imagery to reinvent a form of painting that represented contemporary life. Artists revealed through their art an awareness and understanding of life in a society flooded by vast numbers of photographs and photographic reproductions.

"Cinema, television, magazines, newspapers immersed the artist in a total environment and this new visual ambience was photographic," declared the British artist Richard Hamilton in 1969, reminiscing on the decade. "Somehow it didn't seem necessary to hold on to that older tradition of direct contact with the world. Magazines, or any visual intermediary, could as well provide a stimulus for making pictures." In the late 1950s and early 1960s, in reaction to Abstraction, which had dominated painting for decades, painters such as Hamilton, Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter and Michelangelo Pistoletto began to expose the photographic sources of their works, expressing a new awareness of visual culture in a rapidly changing society.

"By using photographic sources," writes Ralph Rugoff, curator of the exhibition, "artists tacitly acknowledged that it no longer made sense to isolate the making of pictures from the dizzying plenitude of mechanically reproduced images, and to varying degrees their work explored how this ubiquitous medium was altering our ways of seeing." With the reworking of scale, focus and texture, artists aimed to distance us from overly familiar images and provide us with an opportunity to reassess their significance. Seen now not simply as a prompt or *aide-mémoire*, photography was both the subject and object of paintings, which became translations from one medium to another.

In the late 1970s Martin Kippenberger investigated a new relationship between photography in the everyday and art. Recognizing that we inhabit a world saturated with images, during his stay in Florence in 1976 he painted one canvas a day from postcards, newspaper images and snapshots, taking a casual and seemingly arbitrary approach. "The stupidest things suddenly turned into something quite individual," he said, "always get to the heart of the matter, to things that are so close that you wouldn't think of them."

The exhibition continues with more recent works by contemporary artists such as Franz Gertsch, Elizabeth Peyton, Marlene Dumas, Peter Doig, Wilhelm Sasnal and Luc Tuymans.

Recently, more and more artists choose to paint from photographic images found in the media, from the Internet or from snapshots taken with cameras or cell phones. However, the "mechanical" camera vision made manifest in the works of the 1960s is of a little interest to these painters. They explore the possibilities of paint and the effects that painting from photographs has on subjectivity, expanding the notion of the "painterly". To focus on painting in the context of a society overflowing with digital images suggests the failure of photography to represent the complexity of contemporary life. These artists extend time within an image by copying and painting it, pausing and slowing down the flux of imagery of our times by painting life's fleeting moments and using mechanically or digitally produced images in highly personal ways.

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

This exhibition is curated by Ralph Rugoff, Director of The Hayward and was organized by The Hayward, Southbank Centre, London.