

Philip Pearlstein: Up Close and Impersonal

15 October – 15 November 2008

Victoria Miro is pleased to announce the first major presentation in the UK of work by American painter Philip Pearlstein. Considered by many to be the foremost living American realist, Pearlstein's singular practice has since the late 1950s focused on depictions of the female nude.

In his recent paintings and works on paper, Pearlstein presents models in various stages of repose - sleeping, sitting or lying - amidst an array of props including Americana, toys, weathervanes, textiles and furnishings. Reminiscent more of still life compositions, they are an exact and deliberate translation of what the artist observes in his studio, echoing his long-held conviction that "it is the honesty of the attempt to recreate the forms and spaces visually without artistic editing that is one of the hallmarks of realist painting".

Works such as *Two Models*, *Owl*, *Cardinal*, *Eagle Weathervane* (2008) and *Model with Two Boats* (2008) are typical of Pearlstein's carefully arranged scenes, where figure and object are on equal terms, with one allowed no more significance than the other. The artist's flawlessly rendered surfaces; use of stark lighting and awkward compression of pictorial space heightens the detachment of his subjects from lived experience and, as some writers have acknowledged, offers a reading of his work as a form of abstraction.

Philip Pearlstein was born in Pittsburgh, PA in 1924. A contemporary of Warhol, de Kooning and Alex Katz, Pearlstein first came to the attention of the art world in the early 1950s. He was a member of the celebrated *Club on 8th Street*, a group of leading New York artists who championed Abstract Expressionism. Pearlstein's work is included in the collections of many institutions among them The Art Institute of Chicago, The Cleveland Museum of Art, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Whitney Museum.

Pearlstein was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award at the National Academy, New York, in 2008. He has also received honorary doctorate degrees from the New York Academy of Arts, Brooklyn College, and the Center for Creative Studies and the College of Art & Design, Detroit. From 2003 until 2006 he served as the President of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

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