

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Richard Hudson

September 18 – November 7, 2016



LOVE ME, polished mirrored steel, 2016, 200cm x 200cm x 166cm

Leila Heller Gallery Dubai is pleased to present a selection of recent works by renowned British sculptor Richard Hudson. Curator Christian Dominguez notes, "Hudson is one of the few contemporary sculptors of his generation capable of redefining traditional sculpture... his works mainly consist of an efficient mechanism conceived to revise the present time of occidental sculptural practice in its long tradition [as] generator of beauty, and in a more specific way, *essentiality*." Core to the notion of "essentiality" are Hudson's constant quests for the perfect curve and the perfect line, evident in any of his creations regardless of their material make up. The works selected for this exhibition - the artist's first solo show in the region - illustrate his penchant for the iconic and the abstract.

Central to the exhibition is the imposing 2x2 meter heart-shaped sculpture called *LOVE ME*, in polished mirrored steel. While the advent of the heart shape in current iconography can be traced back to medieval European manuscripts, the shape's role as the conveyor of the sentiment "love" has grown throughout the centuries to become one of the world's most recognizable metaphors today. Hudson explains, "Symbols such as the 'Heart' and the 'Teardrop' interest me because of how their simplified forms came to be and the meaning that is imbued in them." The teardrop has had a presence in the history of twentieth century art from Man Ray's glass *Tear* to Roy Lichtenstein and many others. The rich allegories behind these iconic symbols permeate Hudson's creative process. In another rendition of *LOVE ME*, the reinterpreted heart shape is presented stacked, referencing a totem pole. As Richard himself explains, "I like the architectural nature of [totem poles], the way in which they are carved, forms interlock and repeat themselves and I love the space that they occupy stretching from the ground up towards the physical and spiritual heavens...in referencing both the totem pole and Brancusi's timeless masterpiece 'endless column', I want to suggest that the hearts could be repeated many times – if not infinitely." This veneration for his predecessors and their creative contributions to the past not only informs Richard's practice, but also helps to secure its place in the making of contemporary art history.

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This repetition of theme may lead the viewer to wonder what it is that drives Hudson to work and rework the same shape in various materials and sizes in a near obsessive practice. However, for the artist, the individuals' perception of the piece and interpretation – that conjuring up of ideas of what the shape could be and could mean – is what is most relevant and contributes to the objects' preexisting signification in cultural iconography. Likewise, an imposing 1.2-meter high polished mirrored steel teardrop-shaped sculpture, duly called *TEAR*, evokes a myriad of other sentiments with the ultimate dichotomy of pain and happiness.

Hudson's most recent works *TWICE* and *TWISTED* take a step away from figurative representation towards the abstract – all the while maintaining the quintessential component of the curve and, in their surface, reflectivity. This move away from more emblematic forms denotes another level of work and creativity for the artist. Where the pursuit of pure form is a constant, *TWICE* and *TWISTED* are entirely new and original to his oeuvre. Contrary to the teardrop or heart shape, they should not be easy to identify. There is no code to crack. As a charged symbol is not easily recognizable, the true genius and purity of form literally shines through.

The creative process and Hudson's relationship to the materials employed are paramount to his oeuvre. By first modeling these symbols out of clay or plasterline, he notes that he is trying to create a perfect form in an imperfect way. Of his hands-on approach Hudson comments, "I'm as far away from the ready made as you can possibly be." Equally as important as the materials selected, is Hudson's reverence for "line" and "curve". Much of his practice can be seen as a celebration of lines and curves that form the teardrop or the heart, as well as a celebration of the culturally-charged, non-verbal meaning that is ascribed to these particular shapes. By elaborating these works in polished mirrored steel, the act of reflection comes into play. Lines and curves are enhanced in this material. The viewer is present in this material. As the surrounding space is visible in the sculpture, it allows for each installation of one of Hudson's mirrored sculptures to be entirely unique with its own specific scenography also on display.

About the artist:

Sculptor Richard Hudson was born in 1954 in England. He creates partially abstracted re-inventions of familiar sculptural tropes. His hands-on relationship with his diverse materials – most often marble, wood, steel or bronze – produces organic, polished work that is at once timeless and contemporary. Exploring the canon of Western sculpture and changing approaches to beauty, Hudson's smooth and sensual sculptures concern not only the fields of art and art history but also psychology, anthropology and philosophy. Hudson's sculptures, which range in size from miniature to monumental, employ exaggeration and even humor to veil underlying essences of form and beauty. Hudson lives and works in the UK and Madrid. He has had a number of solo and group exhibitions in galleries around the world, exhibiting in the UK, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and the Americas. His works appear in Sculpture Parks and many Private Collections and he is currently exhibiting at the Sotheby's annual *Beyond Limits* exhibition at Chatsworth House, North Derbyshire, England where he has successfully shown on a number of occasions.

About the Gallery:

Since its establishment over three decades ago in New York, Leila Heller Gallery has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting creative dialogue and exchange between Western artists and Middle Eastern, Central and Southeast Asian artists. It has garnered a reputation for identifying and cultivating the careers of artists leaving a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture. Currently representing a diverse roster of Western and Middle Eastern artists, the gallery is also active in the American, European and Middle Eastern secondary art markets. In November 2015, Leila Heller Gallery opened its first international location in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. At 14,000 square feet, the state of the art gallery features three exhibition spaces, making it the largest gallery in the UAE. Showcasing leading regional and international artists, many of whom will be presenting their work in the Middle East for the first time, the gallery is dedicated to supporting the evolving practice of established artists.

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