

Press Release

Max Mara Art Prize for Women: Emma Hart

Media View: 11 July 2017, 10am - midday

12 July – 3 September 2017

Whitechapel Gallery (Gallery 2), Free

The Whitechapel Gallery presents a major exhibition by London-based artist **Emma Hart** (b. 1974) for the sixth edition of the Max Mara Art Prize for Women, a biannual award established in 2005 to champion women artists in the UK. The Prize is a collaboration between the Collezione Maramotti, Max Mara and the Whitechapel Gallery.

Hart's new large-scale installation titled *Mamma Mia!* is the result of a six month bespoke residency which started in June 2016 and was divided between three Italian cities Milan, Todi and Faenza.

Hart presents a family of large ceramic heads, suggesting a dialogue with one other. Each sculpture is jug-like in shape: the spout mimics a nose and the opening a mouth. Produced by the artist in Faenza alongside ceramic artisans, each sculpture is glazed incorporating motifs, such as the speech bubble. The interior space of the heads is filled with vivid patterns, designed and hand-painted by Hart after researching the designs and practice of the Italian tradition of maiolica.

Emma Hart's new work is the culmination of an investigation into pattern: visual patterns, and patterns of psychological behaviour, how to design then rupture these and the ruminations in between. The space between viewer and object is key, as ever in Hart's work, and is charged with the artist's particularly personal take on her experiences in Italy: the heat, light and colour, language and family dynamics in an unfamiliar setting.

Throughout the residency, which was tailored to her practice and interests, Hart had access to lessons about the Milan Systems Approach, a systemic and constructivist method of family therapy at the Scuola Mara Selvini Palazzoli which involves physical re-enactments and the study of repeated actions. In Rome, Hart visited funerary monuments with Katherine Huemoeller, a researcher from Princeton University whose recent investigations has led Huemoeller to focus on gaining an understanding of family relationships and structures in ancient Rome. In Todi, Umbria, Hart discovered maiolica, traditional Italian tin-glazed pottery which provoked her to create the patterns in her work before ending her residency in Faenza where she began consolidating her research and experimenting with new ceramic techniques.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated publication, with guest contributions from writer Craig Burnett, Eisler Curator and Head of Curatorial Studies Daniel F. Herrmann, writer Marinella Paderni and guest curator Bina von Stauffenberg.

The exhibition continues to Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, from 14 October 2017. The work will also be presented as part of an exhibition of Hart's new work at Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh in spring 2018.

Emma Hart makes work that captures the confusion, stress and nausea of everyday experience. Always in pursuit of real life, real feelings, Hart uses ceramics to create claustrophobic installations that engage the viewer physically and emotionally, or in the form of smaller works which come for the viewer. There are frequent verbal and visual spillages, and Hart's use of clay is often corporeal, forming approximate body parts that act as substitutes for human action and employment.

On 9 March 2017, as part of the Prize, Hart was joined by writer Stefan Golaszewski in conversation with Judith Carlton (Director at CGP London): together they discussed being human, strangers and making work. By inviting Golaszewski into a discussion across art forms, they explored some of the shared characteristics of their work – from realism to the dark humour of the everyday.

Emma Hart was selected as the winner of the sixth Max Mara Art Prize for Women by a panel chaired by Iwona Blazwick OBE, Director of the Whitechapel Gallery, joined by Fiona Bradley, Director of the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh; Sarah Elson, Collector and Founder of Launch Pad, a commissioning series supporting emerging artists; Helen Sumpter, Editor at Art Quarterly; and Artist and Royal Academician Alison Wilding.

Emma Hart said: "I have had the most important time of my art life, and probably also my life. Being in Italy has opened me up to many new possible ways of working (and living), and allowed me to push my ideas through an Italian filter. I have started to make my most significant artwork to date, whilst also making fantastic friends. It has been magnifico"

Iwona Blazwick, OBE, Director of the Whitechapel Gallery said: "Deploying her distinctive visual wit and charisma, Emma Hart's new body of work was made alongside the artisans in Faenza. The journey Hart travelled with her family through Italy has tangibly informed her work, revealing new energies and rigour through her interactions with pioneering psychologists and master ceramicists, which she now translates into an arresting new installation. We are delighted to premiere this new work at the Whitechapel Gallery."

Notes for Editors

- Emma Hart lives and works in London. In 2016 she won the Max Mara Art Prize for Women in collaboration with the Whitechapel Gallery. In 2015 she was awarded a Paul Hamlyn Foundation award for Visual Art. Recent solo and two person exhibitions include: Love Life: Act 1, with Jonathan Baldock, Peer, London, The Grundy, Blackpool, De La Warr Pavilion, UK (2016-17), Big MOUTH, Grand Union, Birmingham (2015); Sticky, Austrian Cultural Forum, London (2015); Spread, Art Exchange (2015); SUCKERZ, L'etrangere, London (2015), with Jonathan Baldock; Giving It All That, Folkestone Triennial (2014); Dirty Looks, Camden Arts Centre (2013); M20 Death Drives, Whitstable Biennale, Whitstable (2012); TO DO, Matt's Gallery, London, 2012. Recent group exhibitions include: The London Open, Whitechapel Gallery (2015); Only the Lonely, La Galerie CAC Noisy Le Sec, France (2015); Dear Luxembourg, Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg (2015); Hey I'm Mr.Poetic, Wysing Arts Centre (2014); Bloody English, OHWOW Gallery, Los Angeles (2013). Hart received an MA in Fine Art from the Slade in 2004 and completed her PhD in Fine Art at Kingston University in 2013. In 2017 she will present solo exhibitions at the Whitechapel Gallery, London and the Collezione Maramotti, Italy.

- The Max Mara Art Prize for Women in collaboration with the Whitechapel Gallery is a biannual award established in 2005. It is the only visual art prize for women in the UK and aims to promote and nurture female artists, enabling them to develop their potential with the gift of time and space. The winner is awarded a six month Italian residency tailored to fit the artist and their winning proposal for the Prize. During the residency which is organised by Collezione Maramotti in collaboration with Max Mara and the Whitechapel Gallery, the artist has the opportunity to realise an ambitious new project which is presented in major solo exhibitions at the Whitechapel Gallery in London and Collezione Maramotti in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The prize is open to women artists living and working in the United Kingdom who have not previously had a major solo survey exhibition. The partners of the prize are Max Mara, Whitechapel Gallery and Collezione Maramotti who collaborate on each phase of the prize. Each year a jury chaired by Whitechapel Gallery Director Iwona Blazwick and including a gallerist, critic, artist and collector agree a shortlist of five artists before the winner is decided based on a winning proposal. The Max Mara Art Prize for Women was awarded the British Council Arts & Business International Award in 2007 and has enabled winning artists to take major steps in their careers. Previous winners of the Max Mara Art Prize for Women are **Corin Sworn (2013-15)** - Sworn (b.1976) created a work drawing from the Commedia dell'Arte improvised plays originating in 16th century Italy. The work was on show at Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy until 28 February 2016. Sworn was awarded the Leverhulme Prize 2015 which recognises the achievement of outstanding researchers whose work has already attracted international recognition and whose future career is exceptionally promising. **Laure Prouvost (2011-13)** - Laure Prouvost created an ambitious new large-scale installation for her Max Mara Art Prize exhibition. In 2013 she was awarded the Turner Prize. **Andrea Büttner (2009-11)** - Part of Andrea Büttner's work created for her Max Mara Art Prize exhibition, *The Poverty of Riches*, and titled *Untitled (Paintings)* (2011) was included in the Whitechapel Gallery's landmark exhibition *Adventures of the Black Square* in 2015. **Hannah Rickards (2007-2009)** - The prize enabled Hannah Rickards to realise an ambitious new work she had been researching before winning the Prize. Rickards was also awarded the Leverhulme Prize in 2015 and had a major exhibition at Modern Art Oxford in 2014. **Margaret Salmon (2005-2007)** - Margaret Salmon travelled to Italy and created a triptych of black and white films exploring themes of motherhood. She went on to exhibit at the Venice Biennale in 2007.
- The Max Mara Fashion Group was founded in 1951 by Achille Maramotti and is now run by the next generation. It is one of the largest women's ready-to-wear companies in the world, with 2462 stores in more than 100 different countries
- The Collezione Maramotti opened to the public in Reggio Emilia, Italy on 2007. It is a private collection of contemporary art with an important historical collection (1950-2000); it keeps on with new projects and commissions to international mid career and young artists. For further information, please visit www.collezioneMaramotti.org
- For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world-class artists from modern masters to contemporaries. The Gallery is renowned for showcasing emerging and established female artists and has presented major solo exhibitions of Barbara Hepworth (1955), Eva Hesse (1979), Frida Kahlo (1982), Nan Goldin (2002), Sophie Calle (2009), Gillian Wearing (2012) and Sarah Lucas (2013). The Gallery is a touchstone for modern and contemporary art internationally, plays a central role in London's cultural landscape and is pivotal to the continued growth of the world's most vibrant contemporary art quarter.

Press Information

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