RAYMOND HAINS

From 1 October to 2 December 1999

Raymond Hains (Saint-Brieuc, Côtes-du-Nord, France, 1926) is a unique, unclassifiable artist whose work has played a part in all of the key moments in French art since the war, yet without remaining for long in any of them. At an early age he began reading Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Max Jacob, André Malraux, the Celtic legends, Indian and Tibetan philosophy, studies of the occult… and became interested in photography. On his father's advice he enrolled in the sculpture course at the art school in Rennes, where he met Jacques de la Villeglé, who was studying painting. But before long Hains gave up sculpture, preferring to spend his time readings philosophy and taking photographs. In 1945 he went to Paris, where he worked on the photographic staff of the magazine *France Illustration* until 1947. In Paris he came into contact with the *lettriste* movement and also, through André Breton, with the surrealists. Hains' discovery of a kind of circular reflector fitted with thirty or so small reducing mirrors allowed him to create a fragmented image that was close to abstraction. On his return to Saint-Brieuc, he began taking the photographs he called hypnagogic (from the Greek *hypnos*, sleep, and *agein*, to lead), producing images that were fragmented, geometrically disintegrated, as if they had exploded. Applying this technique to Camille Bryen's poem *Hépérile*, in 1953 he produced *Hépérile eclatée*, "*le premier poème pour dé-lire*" ("the first poem to be de-read"). This play on words *dé-lire/délire* (de-read/delirium) signals the central importance of delirium for Hains, and his fascination with language. Indeed, his work — in common with that of Marcel Duchamp and Raymond Roussel — is characterized by a constant concern: the exploration of the world by way of the underlying mesh of language, with all of the freedom to destroy and reinvent that language possesses.

In 1949 Hains began working with Villeglé. Together they made a short film in black & white, which was never completed. This collaboration continued until 1954, with the filming of torn-up posters. In the best surrealist tradition, Hains is a *flâneur*, and the dérive or urban drifting of the Situationists, with whom he was in contact, is one of his essential practices and methods of work. Regarding the street as his workshop, it was there that he developed his *affiches déchirées* (literally, torn-up posters): Hains and Villeglé would collect pieces of old, faded and peeling posters, preferably with a predominance of typographic content, and transform them into abstract compositions. During this period Hains created his concepts of the *ultraletter* and the *ultraword*, resulting from the deformation and collage of different letters and words, prompted by his fascination with the aural and graphic qualities of words.

With these works, Hains produced his own *sui generis* brand of Informalism, and in ironic allusion to Abstract Expressionism described himself as an *inaction painter*. In 1957, Hains found some old panels and sections of fencing in a warehouse. He was particularly drawn to the sheets of galvanized iron, with which he began to create the *palissades* that are his once again ironic response to American Pop, and look forward to conceptual practices such as those of Daniel Buren and others.

After taking part in the first Biennale de Paris alongside the other "décollagistes", Dufrêne and Villeglé, in 1960 Hains went to live in Italy. In Milan, Pierre Restany launched the concept of new realism, and included in the group Arman, Dufrêne, Klein, Tinguely, Villeglé, Hains, Raysse and Spoerri, with the subsequent addition of César and Rosella. Hains regularly exhibited with the new realists until his departure from the group in 1963, although he stayed in Italy until the seventies, when he returned to Paris. Since then, the singular work of Raymond Hains has been presented in numerous shows all over Europe, and featured at the major international art events such as the Biennale de Paris and the last Documenta in Kassel, where the artist declared that he had become a "neodocumentalist".

The present exhibition includes works from all of Hains' different periods, although it is not intended as a retrospective; rather, it is constructed as a history: a history made up of moments, readings, encounters, on the basis of some kind of objective chance. And although his oeuvre is now historic in scope, Hains is a living artist, who refuses to regard his work as something closed. His creative process has not stopped, and this exhibition — like most of Hains' shows — constitutes his own personal reinterpretation of the whole of that creative process.

Select bibliography

Raymond Hains. Texts by Daniel Abadie, Jacques Villeglé, Jeannine Restany. Paris, Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1976.
Raymond Hains. Poitiers, Musée de la Ville de Poitiers et de la Societé des Antiquaires de l'Ouest, 1989.
Raymond Hains. Guide des collections permanentes ou mises en plis. Commissioners: Catherine Bompuis, Catherine David. Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1990.
Raymond Hains. Gast auf der Durchreise, Portikus, Frankfurt am Main. Co-ordinated by Hervé Chandès. Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain. Suttgart; Oktagon, 1995.
Langue de cheval et facteur temps: Entretien au Café de Palais, Reims, le 8 d avril 1998 dans l'après-midi. Arles, Acres Sud, 1998. Raymond Hains and Marc Dachy.
La peinture après l'abstraction, 1955-1975. Texts by Alain Cueff, Béatrice Parent, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh. Paris, Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1999.

MUSEU D'ART CONTEMPORANI
MACBA
BARCELONA

Plaça dels Àngels, 1
08001 Barcelona
Tel. 934 120 810
Fax 934 124 602
http://www.macba.es

Museum hours
11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. daily
Closed Tuesday
10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday
10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday and holidays

Guided tours
Saturday, at 6 p.m.
Sunday and holidays, at 11 a.m.
Group visits
Reservations: Tel. 934 121 413
Working days (except Tuesday),
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.