



## NEWS FROM THE GETTY

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**GETTY MUSEUM PRESENTS *RICHARD LEAROYD: IN THE STUDIO***

*This is the first monographic exhibition dedicated to Learoyd's work in a U.S. museum*

August 30-November 27, 2016  
J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center



*Man with octopus tattoo II*, 2011. Richard Learoyd (English, born 1966). Cibachrome print. Wilson Centre for Photography © Richard Learoyd, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

**LOS ANGELES** – For more than a decade, Richard Learoyd (English, born 1966) has been using a room-sized camera obscura in his studio to create large-scale prints characterized by mesmerizing detail and lush color. Eschewing digital technologies, Learoyd's labor-intensive process, using a dark chamber fitted with a lens, sensitized paper, and an external light source, resembles the technique associated with the first photographs made in the 1830s. Yet, in their large scale and striking imagery, Learoyd's compositions are startlingly contemporary. ***Richard Learoyd: In the Studio, on view August 30-November 27, 2016*** at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center presents these extraordinary photographs by focusing on the artist's favored subjects: figure studies, intimate portraits, and still lifes.

For Learoyd, the studio is a place where he is free to experiment with various subjects and to refine ideas that are realized in front of the camera. After arranging a scene in his studio, Learoyd enters the camera and affixes a large sheet of sensitized paper onto the wall opposite the lens. Once exposed, the paper is fed into a color-processing machine attached to the camera, a task that takes about 20 minutes. Since the resulting image is not enlarged from a negative or transparency, each photograph is one-of-a-kind and exceptionally sharp.

"Richard Learoyd's work nicely complements and engages with the Getty's renowned collection of nineteenth-century photography, as the process he employs to capture an image is based on one of the oldest methods employed by those pioneering figures," says Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "Contemporary photography is at a very interesting juncture in its history where, after a century of aspiring to be ever more 'modern' in both aesthetic and technical terms, it has rediscovered and reconnected with its roots, while losing none of its innovative vigor. Learoyd is one of the most interesting and compelling practitioners of this phenomenon."

### **Figure Studies**

Capturing his subjects either partially clothed or entirely nude against a plain background, Learoyd emphasizes the weight and mass of corporeal form. With their specific poses, subtle gestures, and truncated views, the images echo a tradition of nineteenth-century academic painting. Learoyd makes this connection clear in *Phie Nude, Front* (2011), which features a female nude in repose. The image is evocative of an odalisque, a popular type of figure painting during the nineteenth century.

The artist's preference for a shallow depth of field compels him to maneuver each sitter into a position where the body is aligned with the focal plane, capturing it in hyper-detail. Parts of the body that are outside the focal plane appear softer in the print, as in *New Man* (2015), where a male nude's twisted torso is in sharp focus in the foreground, while his downturned head is cast in a soft haze. Slight blemishes, long-faded scars, and wayward strands of hair— aspects of a person's appearance often overlooked at a quick glance—become magnified in Learoyd's work, the paper's glossy surface further heightening variations in tone and texture of each subject's skin, hair, and nails.

### **Portraits**

The tradition of portraiture, and the genre's ability both to reveal and obscure a person's identity, has been a subject of ongoing interest for Learoyd. He finds most of his models through friends or acquaintances and usually photographs them only once. He frequently dresses his sitters in clothes found in secondhand stores and uses simple props such as chairs, plinths, or mattresses to steady them before an exposure. These spare environments eliminate distractions and encourage intense scrutiny of the subject's physical and psychological state.

"Historically, portraits have memorialized sitters, and offered a glimpse into their psyche. Learoyd utilizes these conventions in staging his models, but he also knowingly exposes the limitations of this tradition," says Arpad Kovacs, assistant curator of photographs at the J. Paul

Getty Museum, and curator of the exhibition. "The level of detail in his prints do not reveal more information about a sitter's personality, but instead create an aura of intrigue about their identity."

Learoyd's models rarely confront the camera's lens directly, and each is positioned so that attention is focused on select details such as the residue of makeup that has not been completely removed, or grime that has accumulated on the skin.

### **Still Lives**

Learoyd's still-life compositions concentrate on tactile qualities and the visual power of form and space, texture and weight. His subjects range from exotic fauna to common materials such as thread. In *I Just Couldn't Wait* (2014) and *Fish Heart* (2008), string creates intricate geometries to articulate the rigging of a miniature ship's masts or to truss a cuttlefish, while *Colored Cotton 2* (2010) examines thread in its own right, emphasizing the complex layers of a colorful tangled mass.

For his photograph of an antique mercury mirror, Learoyd focused on the patina from the tarnished metal alloy beneath the glass, revealing delicate designs that mimic a star-strewn night sky. In another image, he captured the contorted corpse of a flamingo set atop a sheet of glass, highlighting its brilliant plumage and unusual shape.

*Richard Learoyd: In the Studio* will be on view August 30-November 27, 2016 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center. The exhibition is curated by Arpad Kovacs, assistant curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum. Following the Getty's presentation, the exhibition will travel to the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, Missouri.

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**The J. Paul Getty Trust** is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that includes the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs serve a varied audience from two locations: the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Getty Villa in Pacific Palisades.

**The J. Paul Getty Museum** collects Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts to 1900, as well as photographs from around the world to the present day. The Museum's mission is to display and interpret its collections, and present important loan exhibitions and publications for the enjoyment and education of visitors locally and internationally. This is supported by an active program of research, conservation, and public programs that seek to deepen our knowledge of and connection to works of art.

### **Visiting the Getty Center**

The Getty Center is open Tuesday through Friday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. It is closed Mondays, and January 1, Thanksgiving Day and December 25.

**Summer hours through Sept. 4, 2016: Fridays and Saturdays open until 9 p.m., Sundays open until 7 p.m.** Admission to the Getty Center is always free. Parking is \$15 per car, but reduced to \$10 after 3 p.m. No reservation is required for parking or general admission. Reservations are required for event

seating and groups of 15 or more. Please call (310) 440-7300 (English or Spanish) for reservations and information. The TTY line for callers who are deaf or hearing impaired is (310) 440-7305. The Getty Center is at 1200 Getty Center Drive, Los Angeles, California.

**Same-day parking** at both Museum locations (Getty Center and Getty Villa) is available for one fee through the Getty's Pay Once, Park Twice program. Visit the Museum Information Desk at the Center or the Villa to obtain a coupon good for same-day complimentary parking at the other site.

**Additional information is available at [www.getty.edu](http://www.getty.edu).**

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