



GALLERY LIBBY SELLERS

RICHARD HOLLIS
Curated by Emily King

23 MARCH – 28 APRIL 2012

As part of the team that turned John Berger's epochal BBC TV series *Ways of Seeing* into a book, the graphic designer Richard Hollis invented a revolutionary system for combining word and image that was based on the television format. Still in print, the book remains the staple of art syllabuses worldwide and, over the years, Hollis's layouts have awakened generation after generation to the notion that pictures are political. Alongside designing *Ways of Seeing*, Hollis worked for the Whitechapel Gallery from the late 1960s to the mid 1980s, the latter years under the directorship of the young Nicholas Serota. Working closely with the Gallery's curators and artists, he produced a series of posters, flyers and catalogues that have lost none of their impact over the last four decades. Beyond institutions, he has also sustained long term collaborations with artists including Bridget Riley and Steve McQueen, through which he has developed brilliant strategies for the reproduction and dissemination of individual art works and entire oeuvres.

In spite of these significant bodies of work, Hollis's preference for anonymity has led to him being little known beyond professional circles. He is the graphic designer's graphic designer; a man who tends to be rediscovered every generation by students, many of whom know him as the author and designer of the Thames and Hudson book *Graphic Design: a Concise History*. Hollis claims his output has "no particular style", yet his attention to detail is discernable throughout. He not only integrates text and pictures with unparalleled intelligence, he also pays intense attention to the techniques of production, his goal in every instance being maximum graphic engagement at minimum cost.

Curated for the gallery by design historian and writer Emily King, the Richard Hollis exhibition will consist of approximately 100 items drawn from the designer's own archive. It will reflect his entire professional life, including his travels in the 1950s and 60s to Cuba, Zurich and Paris, his part in founding a new art school in Bristol in 1964, his role in the design of radical politics in the 1960s and 70s and his career-long investigation into the graphic design of culture. Ranging in time and scope from personal collages made in the mid 50s to the graphic framework of Steve McQueen's artwork 'Queen and Country', the exhibition will demonstrate Hollis's singular ability to shape thought through the arrangement of word and image.

To mark the occasion and create an entirely sympathetic framework for the exhibition, the gallery has commissioned upcoming London-based architect Simon Jones to oversee the exhibition design. The exhibition will also coincide with the publication *About Graphic Design*, a collection of writings by Richard Hollis published by Occasional Papers that will launch at the Whitechapel Gallery on 26 April, with a talk by Hollis and Nicholas Serota.