

ART IN REVIEW

## Richard Hollis



Courtesy of the artist and Daniel Pérez/Artists Space, 2013

Richard Hollis's covers for Penguin Books and layouts for New Society, from the mid-1960s.

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With some notable exceptions, the exhibitions at Artists Space feature desiccated, terminally hip art. And too often their most memorable experiential aspect, if not their ultimate content, is the fiercely plain-spoken beauty of the gallery's light-filled headquarters on Greene Street in SoHo.

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But luckily this venerable organization sometimes strays from its mission, as with its exemplary survey of the life's work of the influential British graphic designer Richard Hollis. Granted, it has been staged in Artists Space's Walker Street annex, but it dovetails perfectly with that location's "books-&-talks" focus while also being protected from light damage by the shortage of windows.

This is a show you can sink all your senses into. Consisting almost entirely of printed matter, it is also a model of its kind and easily worthy of the Museum of Modern Art.

Mr. Hollis needs little introduction. Even if his name is unfamiliar, his work is not. He helped design the first, best-known version of John Berger's seminal book, "Ways of Seeing," aligning its sequences of text and image (which begin on the cover) with those of the popular [television show](#) on which it was based. If you possess any catalogs published in the 1970s and early '80s by the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London, you own further Hollis designs. The blocky yet subtly soft-edged font spelling out names like Jack Smith, Eva Hesse, Tony Cragg, Donald Judd, Philip Guston, Mario Merz and others (and also on posters and in magazine ads) remain an indelible part of that era's ethos.

But such efforts are drops in the bucket of Mr. Hollis's career, which included work for many other cultural institutions and jobs as art director for the magazines *New Society* and *Modern Poetry in Translation* and for Penguin Books and Pluto Press. The show traces Mr. Hollis on travels to Cuba and work in Europe, is replete with letterhead designs (including one for Pink Floyd) and also includes one-of-a-kind collaged postcards and the card announcing the birth of his son. Seen previously in London and Paris, it has been organized by the design historian Emily King and the designer Stuart Bailey. We are in their debt.

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