

WINSOR BIRCH

— The Fine Art & Sculpture Company —

Press Release

Winsor Birch presents rediscovered, surrealist artist Henry Orlik in a new exhibition at the Maas Gallery, London

Winsor Birch is delighted to present *Cosmos of Dreams: Rediscovering the Locked-Up Genius of Henry Orlik* at the Maas Gallery in Duke Street, St James's (9th August – 20th August 2024), curated well known paintings specialist Grant Ford. As well as marking the centenary of Surrealism, this exhibition marks fifty years since Orlik exhibited at Acoris, the renowned Surrealist Art Centre in Brook Street in the prestigious West End of London in 1974 where his work was included alongside Surrealist greats Salvador Dali, Giorgio de Chirico, Francis Picabia and René Magritte.

Orlik was only twenty-five when his work was received with enthusiasm at his first solo-exhibition at Acoris in 1972; he subsequently exhibited there and at other top London galleries in the 1970s. In 1980 Orlik moved to the US for four years to gain inspiration for his art. On his return to London, he focused solely on his art, leading a life of solitary patient immersion in his art, selling some paintings privately but shunning large-scale exhibitions. The commercial world of dealers, agents and auction houses was not for Henry as he was suspicious of their motivations.

The themes in Orlik's art are influenced by his family history and memories of childhood as well as the exploration of time and space. His work appears extraordinarily current as he conceptualises enigmatic observations of quantum science which he evokes with meticulous, spirals of paint which suggest the shimmering movement of quantum particles; each minute stroke of paint represents its own unique unit of energy and collectively each of Orlik's canvasses exudes a mysterious energy that takes the viewer to another world of intense, thought-provoking images.

Intertwined bodies and body parts, anthropomorphic landscapes, mother nature, deserts, clowns, shells, space, the lack of integrity in politics, birth and death are all themes which intermingle in his dream-worlds, where his extraordinary sensual and witty images cohere into seemingly rational worlds which somehow, by a trick of memory perhaps or déjà vu, seem strangely familiar and intelligible.

Sadly in 2022, Orlik suffered a stroke which has paralysed his right side, and he continues in poor health. While he was in hospital, his housing association evicted him and subsequently over two hundred of his paintings were taken from his flat in London.

"I have been involved in the art world for 38 years and I have never come across such an extraordinary group of paintings by an artist that should be considered one of our greats. All of these dreams and incredible thoughts have been locked away for decades." Grant Ford

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Image: Henry Orlik, Cannon Balloons, c. 1980



Image: Henry Orlik, Defeat (Aeroplane Over LA), c. 1985

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Notes to the editors

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Images

Henry Orlik (b. 1947)

CANNON BALLOONS

Image © Winsor Birch

Henry Orlik (b.1947)

DEAFEAT (AEROPLANE OVER LA)

Image © Winsor Birch

About Henry Orlik

Born in Ankum, Germany in 1947, Henry Orlik first arrived in England in 1948. His Polish father, Josef Orlik, had served alongside the Allied forces in World War Two and, unable to return to Poland, resettled in England with his Belarussian wife Lucyna and young son. The early part of Orlik's life was spent in various Polish resettlement camps in Gloucestershire and the Cotswolds. The Orliks, like many Polish families, eventually settled in Swindon, Wiltshire which was rapidly expanding post-war.

In 1963 Orlik enrolled at Swindon Art College where he studied for three years, continuing his studies at Gloucestershire College of Art, Cheltenham between 1969 and 1972.

Henry was already making a name for himself by 1971 when he entered a painting at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1971. In 1972 he had a highly successful one man show at the world-renowned Surrealist Art Centre, Acoris, in Brook Street, London W1. Orlik participated in Acoris' mixed *Surrealist Masters* exhibitions in 1972 and 1974. In these exhibitions his work was exhibited alongside many of the most well-known Surrealist artists.

From 1972 Orlik lived and worked in London, briefly living in Los Angeles and New York between 1981 and 1985. After his return to England Orlik increasingly retreated from public life and the art world, choosing instead to focus his attention solely on his work.

About Winsor Birch

Founded by Grant Ford, Winsor Birch represents extraordinarily talented and internationally acclaimed artists whose work is unique, memorable and thought-provoking. We stage art and sculpture exhibitions and events throughout the year. Our shows are carefully curated and set in locations which enhance collectors' and visitors' experience of the art and provide stimulating environments offering the opportunity to visit, learn and enjoy.