

PRESS RELEASE

MONTAGING REALITY

**Oscar Gustave Rejlander: *The Two Ways of Life*
(2 September – 16 October 2011)**

Garage Centre for Contemporary Culture will be hosting an exhibition of Oscar Gustave Rejlander's work, *The Two Ways of Life* (1857), to coincide with *Portfolio Review Russia*, which will also be held at Garage.

Oscar Gustave Rejlander (1813-1875) was part of a generation of radical, young photographers working in the 19th century. Rejlander was also an important pioneer of photomontage, a technique that was later embraced by artists as well as photographers. Photomontage has been used by some of the most influential artists of the 20th century. It is a stylistic element that has been utilised by movements that include the Russian avant-garde, Cubism, Futurism, Surrealism, Pop Art, and that continues to be popular among many contemporary artists.

The Two Ways of Life is an early photomontage of thirty prints, based on Raphael's *School of Athens* (1510-11), an allegory of vice and virtue. Typically Victorian, Rejlander's work shows two apprentices choosing opposite paths in life: a path of immediate pleasure and sin contrasted to a path of education, trade and charity. The work will be shown together with a slideshow of photomontages created by other artists during the course of the 20th century.

The use of such a new technique to present a serious morale subject was highly unusual and innovative for this period. The work was even branded 'unbearable' for its expressiveness when exhibited in 1858, and partially covered with a cloth. It was also presented in a large-scale format, more frequently used for allegorical painting, and even purchased for the Royal Collection. In this way, its status was raised to that of a work of art rather than simply a scientific process of documentation.

Rejlander's *The Two Ways of Life*, his composite and constructed photography techniques, and use of photomontage continue to influence contemporary photography today. This form of working was particularly popular with artists active throughout the 1990s, including David Hockney, Jeff Wall, Calum Colvin, Gregory Crewdson, Scott MacFarland, Hannah Starkey and Clare Strand.

Artist's Biography

Oscar Gustave Rejlander (1813-1875) was born in Sweden and is widely regarded as the 'father of art photography'. Rejlander received his general education in Sweden, and studied painting and sculpture in Rome. After considerable travel he settled in England, where from 1853 he practiced photography. Rejlander rejected contemporary conceptions of photography as a scientific or technical medium. In his efforts to elevate photography to the status of a fine art, he made photographs that imitated painting. He looked to the example of the Old Masters for their use of composition and pose, and often set up his own elaborate compositions in his studio. In many of his works he sought painterly effects by combining and superimposing several negatives to make one print, resulting in a final image that moved beyond the results achieved by traditional photography printing techniques. Rejlander was well known for his ability to capture an emotion or sentiment in his work. A series of photographs of facial expressions and gestures made by Rejlander was used by Charles Darwin in his *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872).

Although he enjoyed a period of critical acclaim, Rejlander died impoverished. However, his influence extended for decades in the form of increasingly frequent debates regarding the merits of pictorialism, painterly effects and the value of more sharply detailed work. A large collection of Rejlander's work is currently on display at The National Media Museum, Bradford.

Garage Center for Contemporary Culture is a major non-profit international arts space based in Moscow, dedicated to exploring and developing contemporary culture, which opened in 2008. There are two distinct areas of programming - to bring important international modern and contemporary art and culture to Moscow and to raise the profile of Russian contemporary culture and encourage a new generation of Russian artists. These are explored through a series of exhibitions ranging from major surveys of important collections to single artist retrospectives or group exhibitions. Garage also hosts a strong program of special on-site events, including talks, film screenings, workshops, performances and creative activities for children. Garage's space includes galleries, open exhibition areas, courtyard, cafe, kids space, purpose-built auditorium and media room, all designed by award winning architect Jamie Fobert.

Garage will be relocating from its current space – the former 20th century Bakhmetevsky Bus Garage – to a new site in a historic pavilion inside Gorky Park, Moscow. Opening to the public in 2012, the space will be developed to include international standard gallery spaces, open exhibition areas, children's creative spaces, education and learning facilities, a cafe and a shop.

Garage is a project of The Iris Foundation, founded by Daria Zhukova.

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Center opening hours:

Mon – Thurs 11.00 - 21.00

Fri – Sun: 11.00 - 22.00

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