

Internationally renowned author Tom McCarthy presents  
*Empty House of the Stare*, a new work of fiction and exhibition

"la Caixa" Collection of Contemporary Art

Selected by Tom McCarthy

19 September – 5 January 2020

Gallery 2 & 7, Free Entry

#laCaixaCollection

Celebrated novelist **Tom McCarthy** (b. 1969, UK) meditates on surveillance and control, and their malfunction and breakdown, in this free display of photography, sculpture, installation and film by artists including **Steve McQueen** (b. 1969, UK), **Eve Sussman** (b. 1961, UK) and **Isa Genzken** (b. 1948, Germany).

McCarthy was invited by Whitechapel Gallery to select from the "la Caixa" Collection, Spain's leading collection of contemporary art, and to write a new accompanying text. Titled *Empty House of the Stare*, this display and new piece of writing take their name from the 1922 poem *Meditations in Time of Civil War* by W. B. Yeats.

McCarthy says: "*My selection from "la Caixa's" collection is based on two premises. Firstly, that we live in an era of mass-mediation, mass-surveillance, mass-control – technological and visual systems that form the architecture within which we dwell. Secondly, that far from being a streamlined, perfectly-calibrated system, this regime is prey to glitches, malfunctions and perhaps even general collapse. It tends towards implosion*".

McCarthy's text is available to read in the Gallery or for purchase as part of the exhibition catalogue. For the exhibition the author presents works by seven artists across two spaces on the gallery's ground and upper floors. An image of a metal object lying shattered in desert sands, which could be from outer space or a fragment of military disasters, acts as the starting point. **Sophie Ristelhueber's** (b. 1949, France) photograph *Fait #60* was taken in Kuwait after the Gulf War. For McCarthy it evokes imagery of surveillance: the first scene from the film *The Truman Show* (1998) in which a camera crashes to the pavement, or an American drone shot down over the desert of Iraq.

Works on the upper floor include *Illuminer* (2001) by **Steve McQueen** (b. 1969, UK), a film in which a man watches a report about troops training for possible military operations in Afghanistan on TV in a dark hotel room. A sculpture by **Isa Genzken** (b. 1948, Germany) – crumpled

## Press Release

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bookshelves found on a lower Manhattan street after September 11, 2001 – bears an uncanny resemblance to the remains of the twin towers. From his series *Destructuras*, a photograph by **Aitor Ortiz** (b. 1971, Spain) shows a modernist building as a haunting concrete shell. A sculptural installation from **Pedro Mora** (b. 1961, Spain) forms an archive of reels of tape made from zinc and cardboard; however if they contain any recordings, they are irretrievable.

The ground floor gallery features a radiant portal by **Eugenio Ampudia** (b.1985, Spain) that might offer illumination and clarity but could be a trick of the light. **Eve Sussman's** (b. 1961, UK) film about a worker in City-A, a Central Asia oil town uses an algorithm so that, like real life, the story is never the same twice.

This is the third in a series of four displays guest-curated by leading writers over the course of a year, drawing from the “la Caixa” Collection.

#### Notes to Editors

- Whitechapel Gallery will present four exhibitions drawn from the “la Caixa” Collection of Contemporary Art from 2019 – 2020, curated by Lydia Yee, Chief Curator, Whitechapel Gallery and Nimfa Bisbe, Head of the Contemporary Art Collection “la Caixa”, with Candy Stobbs, Assistant Curator and Inês Costa, Exhibitions Assistant, Whitechapel Gallery.
- The third in a series of bilingual publications accompanying each display, an illustrated book will include a specially commissioned new piece of writing by Tom McCarthy.

#### About Tom McCarthy

Tom McCarthy is a novelist whose work has been translated into more than twenty languages. His first novel, *Remainder*, won the 2008 Believer Book Award and was recently adapted for the cinema. His third, *C*, was a 2010 Booker Prize finalist, as was his fourth, *Satin Island*, in 2015. McCarthy is also author of the study *Tintin and the Secret of Literature*, and of the essay collection *Typewriters, Bombs, Jellyfish*. In 2013 he was awarded the inaugural Windham Campbell Prize for Fiction by Yale University. He is currently a Fellow of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Programme. McCarthy was on the judging panel for the 2018 Turner Prize.

#### About “la Caixa” -

“la Caixa” Collection of Contemporary Art was founded in 1985 and now includes more than one thousand works. The origins of the Collection lie in “la Caixa”’s commitment to enabling people to enjoy art and culture. “la Caixa” was founded in 1904 and became “la Caixa” Foundation in 2014 following the reorganisation of the savings bank Caja de Ahorros y Pensiones de Barcelona.

The new Foundation inherited the social mission that “la Caixa” has pursued since its inception to improve the wellbeing of people, particularly those most in need, and work towards the advancement of society as a whole. “la Caixa” began organising exhibitions in the early-1980s, presenting contemporary work and establishing a direct connection with twentieth-century art, before going on to form its own collection. The core of the new Collection was devoted to art from the 1980s, though works by outstanding artists from the 60s and 70s were also included. The questions underpinning the Collection consider: What is the role of art in society? How can we break down the barriers that separate people from art?

From the first, the Collection focused on international contemporary art. Bruce Nauman, Cristina Iglesias, Doris Salcedo, Gerhard Richter, Joseph Beuys, Donald Judd, Mona Hatoum, Dora García, Juan Muñoz, Antoni Tàpies, Cornelia Parker, Juan Uslé, Sigmar Polke, Cindy Sherman and Paul McCarthy are just some of the highly renowned artists represented.

**Visitor Information**

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm; Thursdays, 11am – 9pm  
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