

Stephen Chambers: The Big Country and Other Stories
Pera Museum, Istanbul

7 May – 20 July 2014

Press view: 6 May 2014

In May 2014 the Pera Museum, Istanbul, will exhibit *The Big Country and Other Stories* by the Royal Academician Stephen Chambers. This is the first time that the Royal Academy of Arts, London, has collaborated with the Pera Museum to curate an exhibition of work by a Royal Academician.

Mr. Özalp Birol, General Manager of Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation Culture and Art Enterprises, said: “On behalf of the Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation Pera Museum of Istanbul, it is our great pleasure to welcome selected works of Stephen Chambers, a master of printmaking, in collaboration with Royal Academy of Arts, one of the most established and internationally acknowledged art institutions of Britain.”

Edith Devaney, curator of the exhibition said: “We are delighted to bring this exhibition to Istanbul and to be working with the Pera Museum, which builds on our commitment to showcasing the work of Royal Academicians to wider audiences beyond the UK, as well as developing our international relationships with arts communities across the world.”

The Big Country and Other Stories presents Stephen Chambers’ creation of a vast multi-part print and a survey of his painting and graphic works. This selection seeks to explore the origins of *The Big Country* (2012), demonstrating that its development is firmly rooted in the artist’s past practice and deeply indebted to the European tradition of art. The sense of a story being told is a feature of many of Chambers’ works, and writings are often a stimulus for this, as seen in Chambers’ *Flemish Proverbs* series, which will also be exhibited.

Inspired by the landscape and scale of the American Western film *The Big Country* (1958), Chambers’ immense work explores a myriad of fictional encounters between real and imagined historical figures. The notion of the journey and discovery of new lands has here expanded into a depiction of the five continents and the points of departure from one continent to another, raising a fascinating take on the perils and challenges of migration.

The intriguing narratives and powerful atmosphere of exploration and discovery emerge from the deliberately fragmented presentation of this work, forming a technically complex print that seamlessly fuses the analogue and the digital. Chambers’ employment of decorative elements, a flat perspective and fantastical story-telling, highlight the influence that early Italian Renaissance painters, such as Giotto and Uccello, have had on his work.

Stephen Chambers is primarily a painter, however printmaking has always formed a significant part of his work. He has noted in the past that prints produced by artists whose main discipline is not printmaking, can often be the most compelling. For such artists, print-making offers another element of expression and provides an opportunity to experiment, a notion which is borne out in Chambers' finished monumental work.

Organisation

The exhibition is organised by the Royal Academy of Arts, London, with the Pera Museum, Istanbul. It will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by the Pera Museum.

Notes to Editors:

About Stephen Chambers

Stephen Chambers studied at Winchester School of Art from 1978 to 1979 and then at St Martin's School of Art, London from 1979 to 1982. He graduated with a Master's degree from the Chelsea School of Art in 1983. Chambers won many scholarships and awards, including a Rome Scholarship, a Fellowship at Winchester School of Art, and a Mark Rothko Memorial Trust Travelling Award. He has collaborated on three dance projects with the Royal Ballet: *Sleeping with Audrey* (1996), *Room of Cooks* (1997, 1999) and *This House Will Burn* (2001). He was elected a Royal Academician in 2005. The artist says of his work, 'it speaks of states of mind, behaviours and sensibilities.' Critics have praised Chambers' use of colour and his painterly exploration of his medium.

About The Pera Museum

The Pera Museum in Istanbul was inaugurated in 2005. Funded by the Suna and İnan Kiraç Foundation, this private museum is in the historic Tepebaşı quarter of the city, and the building, originally the famous Bristol Hotel, has been transformed into an impressive suite of galleries across several floors housing both the Foundation's permanent collection and hosting a programme of national and international loan exhibitions. This programme of activity and its successful collaboration with many international art institutions has ensured that the Pera Museum has become a leading cultural centre in Istanbul.

About The Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

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07/04/2014