

Media Information: Wednesday 1 April 2009

# BALTIC

## HARLAND MILLER

**Don't Let the Bastards Cheer You Up**  
**Friday 22 May to Sunday 19 July 2009**  
**Ground Floor**

Artist and writer **Harland Miller** presents a collection of paintings and montages at **BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art** from **Friday 22 May to Sunday 19 July 2009**.

These works, located on the ground floor, have been made or adapted, specifically for **BALTIC** from a series of works **Miller** has referred to as the **Bad Weather** paintings. Based on the dust jackets of old Penguin books they are painterly reproductions of these iconic classics but with fictitious titles that are specific to the North East where **Miller** himself grew up. In execution these works reference American abstraction, and German expressionism, which when combined with his writers love of text, create a feeling of belonging to a tradition of very English pop art. As such, the resultant work, which hints at the beat up nature of old paperbacks, evokes a wilful sense of nostalgia within which there are equal measures of the humour and tragedy innate in the culture of the north: **Bridlington - Coastal Erosion – It's Not All Bad News; Yorkshire – It Was A Struggle When Times Were Good and You Can Rely On Me – I'll Always Let You Down**.

Using knowledge gained from research for his latest novel **Reclaim the Night**, **Miller** has made a series of large paintings based on the billboard information widely disseminated by the **West Yorkshire Police** to help catch the **Yorkshire Ripper** in **1978**. The police campaign was founded on the belief that hoax letters and tapes sent to them by **Wearside Jack**, a North East man, who only recently was identified and convicted as **John Samuel Humble**. The poster incorporated samples of the hoaxer's writings as well as a telephone number to call in order to listen to his voice and a second number to call if you recognised either.

Some time after the **Ripper** was caught **Miller** came across one of these posters - the resultant decay, exposing other advertisements from that era, left the message changed, in some ways more poignant. **Miller** states "*I'm not interested in serial killers per se, but it was like a collage of that whole time which I am interested in, and, as well as writing about it I always wanted to make some artwork from it too. I've always liked the weathered look of things, in that way these poster paintings are like the book paintings too, but more than that there was this faded poignancy: instead of saying 'Help us stop the Ripper from killing again. West Yorkshire Police.' it said 'Help us stop killing again. West Yorkshire Police.'*"

**Miller** achieved critical acclaim with his debut novel, **Slow Down Arthur, Stick to Thirty**, (2000), the story of a kid who travels around Northern England with a David Bowie impersonator. In the same year he published a small novella, **First I was Afraid, I was Petrified**, based on the true story of a female relative with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, discovered when **Miller** came across a box full of Polaroid images she had taken of the knobs of a cooker. In 2001 **Miller** began producing the series of paintings based on the dust jackets of **Penguin** books, which are included in this exhibition. **Miller** was the **Writer in Residence** at the **ICA**, London for 2002 and over the course of his residence he programmed a number of events drawing from his experience in literature and fine art, which included a season devoted to the ongoing influence and legacy of **Edgar Allen Poe**.

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For further information please contact:

Ann Cooper, Media Officer T: 0191 440 4915 E: [annc@balticmill.com](mailto:annc@balticmill.com)

Nikki Johnson, Communications Assistant T: 0191 440 4912 E: [nikkij@balticmill.com](mailto:nikkij@balticmill.com)

### NOTES TO EDITORS

BALTIC would like to thank to Irene Bradbury at White Cube, London for her contribution and support in creating the exhibition at BALTIC.

### HARLAND MILLER VISUAL ART BIOGRAPHY

Harland Miller was born in Yorkshire in 1964 and lives in London. From 1984- 1987 he studied at Chelsea College of Art followed by an MA at Chelsea College of Art from 1987-88.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Siesta Forever - Come on and Sing My Song*, *The Fireplace Project*, East Hamptons (2007), *Dear Son*, This is one of the last of my few remaining pre marital possessions - look after it won't you, *Love Dad*, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York (2005), *To Jean*, *A Small Memento for a Great Effort*, *Love Alan*, White Cube, London (2002).

Group exhibitions include *You Dig The Tunnel, Ill Hide The Soil*, White Cube, Hoxton Square and Shoreditch Town Hall, London (2008), Royal Academy, London (2007, 2006, 2005), Kunsthalle, Mannheim (2004) and the ICA, London (1996).

Miller was artist in residence at ICA, London throughout 2002.

**GALLERY INFORMATION:**

**BALTIC** is a major international centre for contemporary art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England. **BALTIC** presents a constantly changing, distinctive and ambitious programme of exhibitions and events, and is a world leader in the presentation, commissioning and communication of contemporary visual art. **BALTIC** has welcomed over 3 million visitors, since opening to the public in July 2002.

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art  
Gateshead Quays  
South Shore Road [info@balticmill.com](mailto:info@balticmill.com)  
Gateshead [www.balticmill.com](http://www.balticmill.com)  
NE8 3BA  
UK

Tel: +44 (0) 191 478 1810  
Fax: +44 (0) 191 478 1922

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Opening hours:  
Monday - Sunday 10.00 - 18.00 (excluding Tuesday)  
Tuesday 10.30 - 18.00