

Media information: 26 April 2011

BALTIC

ROBERT BREER

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (11 June – 25 September 2011)
Tinguely Museum, Basel (26 October 2011 – 29 January 2012)

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead and **Museum Tinguely**, Basel are organising a major exhibition of the work of painter, filmmaker and sculptor **Robert Breer**. Born in Detroit in **1926**, **Breer** is one of the most ground-breaking and celebrated animators in history. This will be his most comprehensive exhibition to date, spanning two floors at **BALTIC** with work from **1950 to the present day**.

The son of an amateur 3D home-movie maker and chief engineer at the Chrysler Corporation, **Breer** initially studied engineering at **Stanford**, before switching to painting. Early enthusiasms were a 1935 BMW open cockpit racing car and stunt flying lessons in a bi-plane. His first real passion, however, was the reductive purity of Piet Mondrian's grid-based abstract paintings. Moving to **Paris** in **1949**, **Breer** developed his own take on hard edge abstraction, exhibiting at the **Galerie Denise René**. He soon rejected the stability and harmony of Mondrian's compositions, introducing implied movement and free-floating lines into his paintings. His forms became irregular and wrestled against each other, appearing in a permanent state of unrest. Around ten canvases from the **1950s**, including **Composition with Three Lines**, 1950, **Time Out**, 1953 and **Three Stages Elevators**, 1955 will be included. Many have not been exhibited for several decades.

Developing the implied movement of his paintings **Breer** also started experimenting with animation, first with flip books and then with film. In his first film, **Form Phases**, 1952, the designs of his paintings were set into motion, morphing from one thing into another and shifting in colour and cinematic space. **Form Phases IV**, 1954, a *tour de force* of movement and instability sees forms, colours, lines and actions burst, complement and contradict each other across every square inch of screen. A tension between the moving and still image defines many of these early works: **Recreation I**, 1956-57 uses a different image for every single frame (24 frames per second), rejecting the supposed reality that traditional film represents and revealing movement as nothing but a repetition of static film cells. As his career progressed **Breer** became ever-concerned with the interplay between abstraction and representation. **Fuji**, 1974 jumps from filmed footage of **Breer's** wife by a train window to a rotoscoped sequence of a ticket collector and countless drawn depictions of Mount Fuji, all of which slip back and forth into and out of abstraction. In **Swiss Army Knife with Rats and Pigeons**, 1980 the functional form of the knife and its red colour separate and dance around each other before reuniting. The exhibition includes these and other pioneering works from **1952** into the **1990s**.

BALTIC's Level 4 gallery will be devoted to another important body of **Breer's** work, the motion sculptures or 'floats', begun in the **1960s**. These simple, almost minimalist forms, move at speed that is almost imperceptible before changing direction upon a collision. Recreating the motion and flux of his films in three dimensions, works such as **Zig**, 1965, **Column**, 1967 and **Sponge**, 2000 surround the viewer, allowing form and change to be experienced in real time and space. **Breer's** greatest achievement, perhaps, has been to use one force to define its opposite – movement to counteract movement, pause to dramatise speed, and representation to concentrate abstraction.

Organised in close collaboration with the artist, the exhibition will be the first to bring **Breer's** work in all media together for several decades, revealing him to be as vital a today as he was in the **1950s**. A major publication will be produced to accompany the exhibition.

This exhibition is supported by: **The Henry Moore
Foundation**

END

For further information on the exhibition, please contact:
Ann Cooper, Head of Communications T: 0191 440 4915 E: annc@balticmill.com

For images please contact:
Nikki Johnson, Communications Assistant T: 0191 440 4912 E: nikkij@balticmill.com

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 3.9 million visitors, since opening to the public in July 2002.

GALLERY INFORMATION:

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art
Gateshead Quays
South Shore Road
Gateshead
NE8 3BA
UK

Admission: FREE

Opening hours:

Monday - Sunday 10.00 - 18.00
Except Tuesdays 10.30 – 18.00

www.balticmill.com

Tel: +44 (0) 191 478 1810
Fax: +44 (0) 191 478 1922
Email: info@balticmill.com

BALTIC is supported by:



Supported by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

