

Richard Demarco to be awarded honorary degree

Artist and patron to receive honorary degree

Professor Richard Demarco CBE, British artist and patron of European visual and performing arts, will receive an Honorary Doctorate from Leeds Beckett University.



Born in Edinburgh in 1930, Richard has been a major figure in the promotion of European arts for more than 60 years, through the Edinburgh International Festival which he has attended every year since its inception in 1947. Our photograph shows him receiving the Edinburgh Award in 2014.

Richard will be awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Arts at 11am on Wednesday 27 July 2016.

In 1963, Richard co-founded the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh before establishing the Richard Demarco Gallery three years later. For many years, the Gallery promoted cross-cultural links, both in terms of presenting European artists within Scotland and in establishing outgoing connections for British artists across Europe. In the early 1990s, Richard transformed the Gallery into the Demarco European Art Foundation to emphasise the educational nature of his work as Kingston University Professor of European Cultural Studies in the Nineties.

Richard has been a keen promoter of Anglo-cultural links with Eastern Europe throughout his career, introducing the work of many European visual and performing artists to the UK through the Demarco Gallery. During the Cold War, he crossed the Iron Curtain over sixty times.

As a result of his seventy years of work, Richard has amassed unique material: including artworks, photographs, as well as audio and moving image material, correspondence, posters, and programmes in the form of a multi-lingual library. This is now on display at the Summerhall performance venue in Edinburgh. However, part of the Demarco Archive is in the collection of The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art which was acquired in 1995. The Demarco Archive, as it is now known, has become a unique academic resource for scholars all over the world studying European arts, curatorship, developments in cultural policy, and the history of the Edinburgh Festival.

Over his years of involvement in the Edinburgh International Festival, Richard has put on a wide variety of challenging theatre productions, art exhibitions and other cultural events. In 1972, he transformed The Demarco Gallery into a British version of The Bauhaus and Black Mountain College, in collaboration with Edinburgh University. Many of the artists, actors, directors, musicians, and filmmakers who first appeared outside their home countries at his Edinburgh festival venues, including George Melly, Arthur Oldham, Richard Buckle, Sophie Thomson, Miriam Margolyes, Sir Richard Eyre, Richard Johnson, Jim Sheridan, Bill Forsyth, Rachel Weiss, David Farr, Stuart Hopps and Yvette Bozsik, subsequently became world-renowned.

For the 2016 Edinburgh Festival exhibition, The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art is presenting, in collaboration with the Demarco European Art Foundation, an exhibition entitled 'Richard Demarco and Joseph Beuys: A Unique Partnership'.

As an artist, Richard is represented in over 2,500 art collections, both public and private, including the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, The Victoria and Albert Museum, The British Government Collection, the National Gallery of Lithuania and many municipal and university collections.

Richard's contributions to all the aspects of the arts have been recognised, not only by the British Government with both an OBE and a CBE, but also other honours of a similar kind from Poland, Romania, Germany, Italy, France and the United States. In 2013, the European Parliament gave Richard their medal citing him as European Citizen of the Year 2013. He received this from Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament. This medal was awarded for his efforts in helping to bring down the Iron Curtain through the language of all the arts. He is an artist expressing himself in watercolour, mural painting and print-making. In 2010, The Royal Scottish Academy presented an exhibition, honouring his 80th birthday. It was entitled 'A Life in Pictures'; alongside this exhibition, there was another entitled 'Ten Dialogues: Richard Demarco – Scotland and the European Avant-Garde'. This exhibition celebrated his fruitful collaborations with major artists – Joseph Beuys, Paul Neagu, Tadeusz Kantor, Guther Uecker, Marina Abramovic, Alistair McLennan, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Rory McEwen and Ainslie Yule.

Last year, he was honoured by an exhibition at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow by an exhibition entitled 'Beuys, Kantor, Demarco' and this year during the Edinburgh Festival, The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art are presenting the exhibition entitled 'Richard Demarco and Joseph Beuys: A Unique Partnership'.

Leeds Beckett University Chancellor, Sir Bob Murray CBE, said: "Richard has long been a supporter of Performing Arts here at Leeds Beckett and was integral in establishing our performing arts teaching provision.

"He commissioned our University's first performance at the Edinburgh Festival, and our work with the Demarco European Art Foundation has resulted in many student and staff projects being performed at the Festival over the years. Richard's European connections have encouraged the international

developments in Performing Arts at Leeds Beckett and his archive is a crucial research resource for our students and staff; we now have a PhD student working with the archive and several other projects in development.”