

Richard Demarco honoured by the Saltire Society

The Saltire Society has welcomed Richard Demarco, one of Scotland's most influential advocates of the use of all the arts as an essential element in teaching on primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, as an honorary member of the Society.

Demarco is Professor Emeritus of European Cultural Studies at Kingston University.

His contribution to Scotland was recognised at an intimate reception at the Saltire Society's Headquarters off the Royal Mile, Edinburgh on Thursday.



Richard Demarco CBE receiving the Edinburgh Award in March 2014

Dolina MacLennan, celebrated cultural campaigner, actor and Vice Convener of the Saltire Society hosted the reception for Professor Demarco which included a score of artists, creatives and peers speaking about his impact on the many facets of Scottish and international culture.

Dolina said: "It is a huge honour to be presenting Richard Demarco, whom I have known since the 60's with an Honorary Membership of the Saltire Society.

On receiving his Honorary Membership, Richard Demarco said: "I have been in the world of the Saltire Society for the last 50 years.

"I have had so many friends working within Scottish culture, in relation for Europe, and it is so gratifying to see the Saltire Society exist.

"The Saltire Society is the very beating heart of Scotland and I therefore feel part of that beating heart by being an Honorary Member."

Sarah Mason, Executive Director of the Saltire Society had the honour of presenting Professor Demarco with his Honorary Membership said: "Richard Demarco is a true icon of visual and performance art. Art in its sincerest, international sense. His track record, achievements and continuing drive are that which others could only dream to reach in 10 lifetimes. In his 93rd year, Richard is as enthusiastic, animated and determined as he has ever been. The Saltire Society is delighted to be able to recognise Richard Demarco's work with an Honorary Membership."

Richard Demarco (born in Edinburgh, 1930) is an artist and promoter of the visual and performing arts and literature.

His contributions to contemporary art internationally have been recognised on numerous occasions, receiving the Polish, German and Romanian Gold Orders of Merit, the Cavaliere della Repubblica d'Italia, the Chevalier des Arts et Lettres de France and the Order of Commander of the British Empire.

He was co-founder of the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh which opened in 1963 after gestation period of seven years. Three years later he and other organisers of the gallery space left the Traverse to establish what became the Richard Demarco Gallery.

For many years, the Gallery promoted cross-cultural links, both in terms of presenting artists such as Marina Abramovic within Scotland and in establishing outgoing connections for Scottish artists across Europe.

His involvement with Joseph Beuys led to various presentations, from Strategy : Get Arts in 1970 to Beuys' hunger strike during the Jimmy Boyle Days in 1980.

Also particularly notable were the presentations by Tadeusz Kantor's Cricot 2 group during the 1970s and 1980s. An official Edinburgh International Festival performance of The

Water Hen at the former Edinburgh poorhouse in 1972 was a notable success. Cricot 2 returned to Edinburgh in later years. Demarco introduced Beuys and Kantor to one another and, in one performance of Lovelies and Dowdies, Beuys performed under Kantor's direction. For twenty-five years, Demarco was director of the official Edinburgh International Festival programme of contemporary art.

Since the early 1990s, Richard Demarco's activity has been manifested through the Demarco European Art Foundation.

Richard Demarco has attended every Edinburgh Festival. He has attended, or been extensively involved with, the Edinburgh Festival (and Festival Fringe), the largest arts festival in the world since its inception in 1947.

Richard joins the Society's growing list of honorary members which includes the late Dame Elizabeth Blackadder, Professor Peter Higgs, Dr Ann Matheson and many more distinguished contributors to the cultural landscape of Scotland.



Dolina MacLennan Vice Convener of the Saltire Society with Professor Richard Demarco