

Hayward gallery to host UK's first Carsten Höller retrospective

Exhibition of experimental Belgian artist's works will be the last show before two-year closure of the art gallery

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Thursday 7 August 2014 06.00 BST

The Hayward Gallery has announced it will host the first ever UK retrospective of Carsten Höller as its summer exhibition next year, the gallery's final show before it closes for two years.

Höller, an experimental Belgian artist who originally worked as a scientist, has built his international reputation on artworks that range from a museum filled with reindeer fed on hallucinogenic mushrooms to a fully functioning guerilla nightclub in north London. In the UK, he is still best known for his 2006 piece, Test Site, which allowed willing participants to launch themselves down metallic double-helix slides installed in the Tate Modern's cavernous Turbine Hall.

Ralph Rugoff, director of the Hayward Gallery, said the exhibition which opens in June 2015 would push the boundaries of audience experience and perception. "Visitors will have a choice of how they enter the show and exit it," he explained, "with those choices leading to quite dramatically different results experiences."

"Throughout the show there will be works that are to do with perceptual psychology and the often unconscious decisions we make in terms of how our perception structures the world around us. Carsten has often said he's very interested in embracing uncertainty - not in being uncertain, but in making uncertainty this fertile state where you are open to suggestions because you aren't committed to a particular decision already."

He continued: "I hope this will introduce people to the nuances of Carsten's work because sometimes his work is quite subtle. He is one of those artists who, because of this huge Turbine Hall sensation he created, has almost been indelibly associated in the minds of Londoners with this type of spectacular work, and yet he's done many different types of things. A lot of his work is really about the psychology of making decisions - what happens when you don't know something, how do you move forward, how do you make connections in the dark."

Rugoff said he is already working closely with Höller on the exhibition, and that the artist is keen to utilise the structure of the Hayward gallery, having been a long-time lover of the building's brutalist architecture. While the famous carousel which formed the centrepiece of Höller's 2011 retrospective in New York would be absent, new artworks specially created for the space are in the pipeline.

He said: "We will also be doing things out on the three different terraces of the Hayward, so the show will open up to the outdoors as well. Carsten is completely involved in every decision, including the fact that, right now, we are thinking of doing something completely different with the catalogue that I don't think has ever been done for an exhibition, but I can't tell you exactly what that is.

"Carsten is one of these artists who is always testing what it is possible to make, so there are some things that would involve some very unusual experiences. One would be that some visitors might fall asleep in one location and wake up in another. I don't know any other artist who thinks the way Carsten does and has this kind of playfulness."

He added: "Having this as the final exhibition before the gallery shuts gives us the potential freedom to take a few liberties with the building that we might not normally be able to take."

The Hayward also announced the other two exhibitions that would make up its final programme before the gallery temporarily closes in September 2015 for two years of renovations. One of them, a show entitled Mirrorcity, focuses entirely on artists living and working in London, offering a snapshot of the multifaceted cultural environment of the art and of the city itself. The 23 artists who will feature in the show were selected by chief curator Stephanie Rosenthal, who visited more than 100 art studios in London over the past year. They will include video artist Susan Hiller, the 2013 Turner prizewinner Laura Prouvost and experimental sculptor Helen Marten.

Rosenthal said: "I wanted to pick some of the most interesting and relevant voices in the London art scene at the moment, not just focus on the young and hot. The themes and subjects I found that were really being explored were these ideas of fluidity, of virtual space and the question of fictional reality and what is reality. A lot of them talked about JG Ballard and the influence of science fiction. What became clear was the way in which London's artists are really exploring where we are with technology and how it changes the way we navigate the world. So I decided I wanted to do a show we've called Mirrorcity because I wanted to talk about this space between the virtual and the physical, and showcase the London artists who are exploring this these within a variety of different ways."

The Hayward will also embrace the general election in May next year as a political backdrop to its spring 2015 exhibition, currently with the working title Britain Can Make It, which will open in February. The show will see six individual artists - Richard Wentworth, John Akomfrah, Jane and Louise Wilson, Hannah Starkey, Roger Hiorns and Simon Fujiwara - each curate a "chapter" of the exhibit with objects, artefacts and artworks they feel reflect an important moment in history from 1945.

The issues explored in the exhibition, said Rugoff, ranged from the emergence of key social institutions, consumerism, mad cow disease and the origins of the surveillance state.

Rugoff explained: "I don't think I've ever heard of an exhibition like this, where you have six artists working in parallel but not as a team, each creating their own slice of this particular period of history and coming at it from very different angles. I think it is going to be something that goes beyond just an art show. It's very much about the decision people are going to make in the general election, for us to reflect back on where we've come from and what's happened in the last 70 years, and feed into all those discussions about what decision the country is going to make in May."