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## **The Hammer Museum Presents**

### ***EVA HESSE SPECTRES 1960***

**On view September 25, 2010 – January 2, 2011**

**Los Angeles** – This fall the Hammer Museum presents *Eva Hesse Spectres 1960*, an exhibition of seminal and rarely seen paintings by legendary artist **Eva Hesse** (1936-1970). Created when Hesse was just 24, this group of nineteen semi-representational oil paintings stands in contrast to her later minimalist structures and sculptural assemblages, yet constitutes a vital link in the progression of her work. While several recent museum exhibitions on Hesse's work have featured a few of these paintings from 1960, none have considered these works as a group all together. This timely reassessment of Hesse's career furthers an understanding of her artistic contributions.

Organized by **E. Luanne McKinnon**, Director of the University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, the exhibition focuses on what McKinnon terms Hesse's "spectre" paintings for their haunted interiority and attempt to embody emotional states in abstract form. There are two distinct groups within this spectre painting series. In the first, the figures in these intimately scaled (approx. 9 x 12 in.) paintings are gaunt, loosely rendered, standing or dancing in groups of two or three yet disconnected from one another. The second group of works presents both odd, alien-like creatures and depictions that resemble the artist herself, in traditional easel-size scale (approximately 32 x 42 inches).

The exhibition, situated in Gallery II, will consider these semi-representational and evocative spectre paintings not merely as self-portraits *per se*, but as states of consciousness, and thereby open a dialogue about Hesse and her aspirations against a diaristic account of nightmares/visions that remained constant throughout her life. As McKinnon notes, "Looking inwardly and outwardly and with paint as her guide, she began to paint herself out and away and ahead...The procession of paintings under examination here represents a rupture that, once completed (not as a formal solution but rather as a psychological denouement), settled back into solving the problems presented in abstraction, eventually evolving into the constructions that Hesse is lauded for."<sup>1</sup> Against a corpus of commentary which has suggested that these particular works are abject exercises of self-deprecation, *Eva Hesse Spectres 1960* will examine them as testimonies to a private anxiety. This exhibition aims to further an understanding the development of Hesse's artistic voice and contribution, as the spectre paintings demand an historical reconsideration of when Hesse became "Hesse."

#### **About the artist**

Born in Hamburg in 1936, Eva Hesse and her family fled in 1938 to escape the fate of Germany's Jews and settled in New York City. She was determined to be an artist from an early age, striving at first to be a painter. She began to create startlingly original configurations that exploited the

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from page 8 of the Preface from *Eva Hesse Spectres 1960*, (2010) published by Yale University Press.

properties of cheesecloth, rubber, plastic, tubing, cloth, and other materials. Hesse achieved a level of success attained by few women of the time. By 1963 she had had her first one-woman show; by 1968 she had gallery representation. She died in 1970 of a brain tumor. Two years after her untimely death, the Guggenheim Museum held a retrospective of her work—the first such exhibition organized around a woman.

### **About the curator**

**E. Luanne McKinnon** serves as Director of the University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque. She conceived the project *Eva Hesse Spectres 1960* and is curator of the exhibition and editor of the publication. Her scholarship includes work on early European modernism with a concentration upon non-objective painting and monochrome art. She has presented papers at various conferences including the titles “Missing Persons: The Suprematist Portraits of Kazimir Malevich” (College Art Association, 2005), and “Picasso’s Lightbulb: A War Story (Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC).” Other areas of research have been coordinated with exhibition projects including the publications, *James Turrell and the Emblemata Sacra* (Segura Press, 1997); *Corps Exquis: Fragments from a History of the Human Form: 1565-2008* (Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Rollins College, 2007); and, *Crossing the Line: African American Artists in the Bradley Otis Collection*, with Franklin Sirmans (Chief Curator of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art).

### **Public Programs and Catalogue**

*Eva Hesse Spectres 1960* will be accompanied by free public programs and a catalogue co-published and distributed by Yale University Press (2010). The catalogue will include color reproductions of all works in the exhibition with new scholarship, in four chapters, by **E. Luanne McKinnon**, Director of the University of New Mexico Art Museum; **Elisabeth Bronfen**, Global Distinguished Professor of German, NYU, and Chair of American Studies at the University of Zurich; **Louise S. Milne**, Lecturer at Napier University and the Centre for Visual Studies, Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland; and **Helen Molesworth**, chief curator at the ICA, Boston.

*Eva Hesse Spectres 1960* was organized by the University of New Mexico Art Museum and made possible by the FUNd Endowment, the Julius Rolshoven Memorial Fund, and the Robert Lehman Foundation.

Major support for the Hammer Museum’s presentation is provided by Alice and Nahum Lainer. Generous support is also provided by Agnes Gund, The Audrey & Sydney Irmas Charitable Foundation, the Fran and Ray Stark Foundation, the Dedalus Foundation, the Southern California Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and the Robert Lehman Foundation.

## **ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM**

The Hammer Museum, a public arts unit of the University of California, Los Angeles, is dedicated to exploring the diversity of artistic expression through the ages. Its collections, exhibitions, and programs span the classic to the cutting-edge in art, architecture, and design, recognizing that artists play a crucial role in all aspects of culture and society.

Founded by Dr. Armand Hammer in 1990, the museum houses the Armand Hammer Collection of Old Master, Impressionist, and Post-Impressionist paintings and the Armand Hammer Daumier and Contemporaries Collection. Associated UCLA collections include the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, comprising more than 45,000 prints, drawings, photographs, and artists' books from the Renaissance to the present; and the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden on the UCLA campus. The Hammer's newest collection, the Hammer Contemporary Collection, is led by works on paper, particularly drawings and photographs from 1960 to the present.

The Hammer presents major single-artist and thematic exhibitions of historical and contemporary art. It also presents approximately ten Hammer Projects exhibitions each year, providing international and local artists with a laboratory-like environment to create new work or to present existing work in a new context.

As a cultural center, the Hammer offers a diverse range of free public programs throughout the year, including lectures, readings, symposia, film screenings, and music performances. The Hammer's Billy Wilder Theater houses these widely acclaimed public programs and is the new home of the UCLA Film & Television Archive's renowned cinematheque.

## **HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION**

For current program and exhibition information call **310-443-7000** or visit **[www.hammer.ucla.edu](http://www.hammer.ucla.edu)**.

**Hours:** Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, 11am – 7pm; Thursday, 11am – 9 pm; Sunday, 11am – 5 pm; closed Mondays, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

**Admission:** \$7 for adults; \$5 for seniors (65+) and UCLA Alumni Association members; free for Museum members, students with identification, UCLA faculty/staff, and visitors 17 and under. The Museum is free for everyone on Thursdays.

**Location/Parking:** The Hammer is located at 10899 Wilshire Boulevard, at Westwood Boulevard. Parking is available under the Museum. Rate is \$3 for three hours with Museum validation.

**Hammer Museum Tours:** For group tour reservations and information, call 310-443-7041.