

René Magritte

Dangerous Liaisons

BLAIN|DI DONNA

981 Madison Avenue

New York, NY 10075

28 October — 1 December 2011

Preview: Thursday 27 October, 6-8pm

"Everything we see hides another thing, we always want to see what is hidden by what we see."

René Magritte



Les Liaisons dangereuses, 1935, oil on canvas,
28 ¾ x 21 ½ in (73 x 54 cm)

Blain|Di Donna is delighted to present as its inaugural exhibition, *Dangerous Liaisons*, a survey of paintings, works on paper and objects by the Belgian Surrealist René Magritte.

Bringing together over twenty five major oils, gouaches and drawings, this is the first Magritte show of this scale to be presented in New York in almost fifteen years, and comes at a time of renewed interest in Surrealism and its key exponents. The exhibition's title is derived from Magritte's seminal early work, *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1935), an enigmatic painting thought to have been inspired by the eighteenth century French novel of the same name, in which two rival lovers deploy sex as a weapon to humiliate others. As with many of the works in the artist's oeuvre, it delights and disturbs in equal measure; uncanny, poetic, playful and erotic, it underlines his unsettling ability to pull at the threads of philosophical and psychological certainties, and in doing so eloquently sets the tone of the exhibition as a whole.

Also included is *La Trahison des images* (1952), Magritte's best known painting and one of the great propositions of Modern art; a smoking pipe rests on a wooden background under which 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe' is inscribed on a plaque, posing the question: how can we really believe what we see and what role does perception play in our comprehension of reality? Equally recognizable is *Le Goût de l'invisible* (1964), in which an apple engulfs the face of a bowler-hatted man, while *L'Empire des lumières* (1954) presents one of the artist's most celebrated and popular subjects, and is characteristically an iconic image and a visual paradox. This large-scale enigmatic painting explores phenomena including the coexistence of day and night, the nocturnal landscape and the skyscape, and the interplay of lightness and darkness, evoking the mysterious quality embedded in Magritte's expressive art.

A selection of Magritte's best work in gouache accompanies these masterpieces, and the drawings demonstrate his brilliance as a draughtsman, offering a rare insight into this aspect of his artistic practice. Above all, Magritte was celebrated for his wit, humor and playfulness, characteristics which are encapsulated perfectly by the inclusion of *Femme-bouteille* (1941), where the form of a naked woman mirrors the curves of the wine bottle upon which it lies, the bacchanal connotations flowing within the viewer's mind.

Iconic, immediately affecting and universally recognizable, Magritte's pictorial conundrums, trademark double-takes, and visual-verbal paradoxes are as pervasive as ever, as indicated by the appropriation of his imagery by subsequent artists, film directors, advertising agencies, and musicians – key examples include the logos of The Beatles' record label and CBS.

States Di Donna: "The art of René Magritte is the focus of a number of major museum exhibitions in Europe this autumn, including Tate Liverpool, The Albertina in Vienna and Foundation Beyeler in Switzerland, showing that his powerful art continues to enchant and mesmerize. Magritte's pictorial language will continue to be greatly admired for its poetry and diversity of subjects, highlighting his critical place within the history of art as demonstrated in this exhibition."

For further information on the exhibition, please contact: press@blaindidonna.com

Notes to editors:

About René Magritte:

René Magritte was born in Belgium in 1898, and died in 1967.

Selected solo and group exhibitions:

Current: *René Magritte: The Pleasure Principle*, Tate Liverpool, 24 June – 16 October 2011.

Forthcoming: *The Pleasure Principle*, The Albertina, Vienna, 9 November 2011 - 26 February 2012, *Dalí, Magritte, Miró – Surrealism in Paris*, Foundation Beyeler, Switzerland, 2 October 2011 – 29 January 2012.

Past: *Another World: Dalí, Magritte and the Surrealists*, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, 2010/11; *A Look into the Invisible| Magritte, De Chirico, Ernst, Balthus*, Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 2010; *Magritte and Contemporary Art, The Treachery of Images*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, USA, 2006/7; *Magritte retrospective*, BA-CA Kunstforum, Vienna, 2005.

About Blain|Di Donna:

Blain|Di Donna is a secondary market gallery founded in 2010 by Emmanuel Di Donna and Harry Blain. Located on the second floor of the Carlyle Hotel on Madison, in the space previously occupied by Ursus Books, it specializes in artworks by Impressionist, Modern and selected Contemporary artists, and will stage three to four exhibitions a year. Di Donna, 39, is a former Vice Chairman of Sotheby's. During his 17 years with the company, he was involved in almost all the major Impressionist and Modern auctions in London and New York. Blain, 43, co-founded Haunch of Venison with Graham Southern in 2002. Both left Haunch of Venison last year to set up Blain|Southern, which includes a gallery on Dering Street, Mayfair, an appointment-only gallery on Hill Street, just off Berkeley Square, and a gallery in Berlin.

Dangerous Liaisons will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue with texts by Charly Herscovici, the President of the Magritte Foundation, and Timothy Baum, leading specialist on Surrealism and author of *Surrealism: Two Private Eyes* (2003).

This exhibition has been made possible by loans from major private American and European collections, and the support of the Magritte foundation in Brussels.