

Press release: 09 December 2008

DEATH COUNTER Installed at Hiscox UK Headquarters, London

New Artwork Documents Annual Worldwide Death Figures

1 January 2009 - 31 December 2009

London UK – DEATH COUNTER, a major new artwork by international artist Santiago Sierra will be unveiled on the façade of Hiscox insurers' UK Headquarters in the City of London. The giant LED sign documents the annual number of human deaths worldwide, from any cause, over the course of one year starting from zero on New Year's Eve.

The compelling public artwork will adhere to Sierra's minimalist aesthetic whilst serving as a fast-paced reminder of the transient nature of both human life and capital, right in the heart of London's financial district. The artwork will be loaned to international specialist insurers Hiscox for the period of one year in exchange for an insurance policy of €150,000, payable in the event of the artist's death and valid for the duration of the exhibition. Thus, it exists not simply as an artwork, but also as a legally binding contract between Hiscox and the artist. The value of the insurance policy has been set in relation to the value of the artwork. The death count will be based upon a demographic projection taken from the US Census, currently estimated at being just over 55 million deaths per year, a rate of nearly two deaths per second.

Art production agency ELECTRA have collaborated with Fine Art insurers Hiscox, who have a long history of supporting the arts to bring this challenging, topical and thought provoking project by Santiago Sierra to the City of London. Exploring the concept of value in relation to human life and art, this collaboration invokes elements of risk and value speculation to raise a number of important questions around how the values of life, death and art are determined; including how value corresponds to concepts of labour and commodification.

As with his previous projects, Sierra has dramatized the relationship between 'work' and 'worth' by placing precise economical transactions in a visual context. As Hiscox receives the right to exhibit the artwork for one year in return for providing the artist's life insurance, the artist sets the value of his own life against the value of the artwork, as well as symbolically in relation to collective global deaths. In the event of the artist's death before the year is up, the insurance policy will be paid out to a benefactor of Sierra's choice and the artwork returned to his estate at the end of the exhibition, 00:00hrs 1 January 2010.

DEATH COUNTER by Santiago Sierra is the second part of the project *Offer and Exchange: Sites of Negotiation in Contemporary Art*, a series of site-specific commissions inviting artists using legal contracts as artistic frameworks curated by Daniel McClean and Lisa Rosendahl. Each commission has been conceived for one of the following sites in which art is made visible by being exhibited, publicized, sold or collected: (i) the commercial gallery; (ii) the corporate collection; (iii) the art magazine; (iv) the public institution; (v) the private collection; (vi) the auction house; (viii) the art fair. DEATH COUNTER explores the site of the corporate art collection and has been commissioned by ELECTRA in collaboration with Hiscox, with generous support from Henry Moore Foundation and Lisson Gallery.

Robert Read, Group Fine Art Underwriter, Hiscox said: *"This is a challenging and thought provoking piece which will make its mark on the city. Hiscox is in the business of valuing risk so the relationships between the contract, value of life and unusual property are familiar topics. It portrays the complexity of commerce."*

Elliot McDonald, Curator, Hiscox Art Projects said: *"As much as art is about life so too, and maybe on a greater scale, is it about death. A constant theme since man tried to graphically recreate his own image, death in art has forced us to question a subject we can only philosophise on - there are no guaranteed exit and entry points of information. Santiago Sierra has taken a very original view on the theme - equating the black hole of death to a series of numbers is both of-our-age and visually mesmerising at the same time. Connecting those numbers with a value of one life (his own!) he brings us a whole new dilemma involving three of life's big themes; Money, death and self-assurance. A fabulous concept and a stunning sculpture."*

Santiago Sierra was born in Madrid in 1966. He gained extensive international recognition in 2001, when he was invited to develop new projects by several major institutions worldwide. The resulting works include *Workers who cannot be paid, remunerated to remain inside cardboard boxes*, Kunstwerke Berlin, Berlin; *A person paid for 360*



continuous working hours, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, New York; and *The wall of a gallery pulled out, inclined sixty degrees from the ground and sustained by five people*, Acceso A Gallery, Mexico City. In 2003, Sierra was invited to represent Spain at the 50th Venice Biennale. Sierra has continued developing challenging new projects, including *House in Mud*, Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover, 2005; *245 m3*, Stommel Synagogue, Pulheim, Germany, 2006; *Submission*, Proyecto Juárez, Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, 2006/07; and *The trap* and *The Adults*, Centro Cultural Matucana, Santiago de Chile, Chile, 2007. Recent group exhibitions include *The Living Currency*, Tate Modern, London, 2008; *Arte no es Vida: Actions by Artists of the Americas 1960-2000*, El Museo del Barrio, New York, 2008; *RAUM. Orte der Kunst*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 2007; and *Surprise Surprise*, ICA, London, 2006. His work has been included in the 51st International Venice Biennale, 2005 and 2 Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, 2007. For more information visit www.santiago-sierra.com

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For further information please contact:

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Notes to editors

Exhibition Information

Hiscox Art Café, 1 Great St Helen's, London, EC3A 6HX
Monday – Friday 0730hrs – 1730hrs

Hiscox and Contemporary Art

Hiscox has a long and established association with contemporary art and is well-known for owning, collecting and insuring fine art. Hiscox was one of the first UK insurers to offer art insurance as a stand-alone insurance class for private collectors, museums and galleries. Driven by Chairman Robert Hiscox, the company has an impressive contemporary art collection that features over 50 artists including Damien Hirst, Richard Billingham, Marc Quinn, Mat Collishaw, Keith Coventry, Gregory Crewdson, Mark Wallinger and Cecily Brown. The collection is on permanent display in Hiscox offices around the world and is regularly updated.

Hiscox Art Projects is a contemporary exhibition space situated within the café of Hiscox's London office which aims to make contemporary collections and exhibitions readily accessible to those living and working in the City, as well as the wider art community. In addition to this, Hiscox enjoys uncovering and encouraging emerging talent and sponsors degree shows at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris.

For more information about Hiscox art collection, please contact Elliot McDonald, Curator, Hiscox Art Projects: 020 7448 6455 / elliott.mcdonald@hiscox.com

For further information, go to www.hiscoxartprojects.com

About Hiscox

Hiscox, headquartered in Bermuda, is a specialist insurance group listed on the London Stock Exchange. There are three main underwriting parts of the Group – Hiscox Global Markets, Hiscox UK and Europe, and Hiscox International. Hiscox Global Markets underwrites mainly internationally traded business in the London Market – generally large or complex business which needs to be shared with other insurers or needs the international licences of Lloyd's. Hiscox UK and Hiscox Europe offer a range of specialist insurance for professionals and business customers, as well as high net worth individuals. Hiscox International includes operations in Bermuda,



Guernsey and USA. Hiscox Insurance Company Ltd, Hiscox Underwriting Ltd, Hiscox ASM Ltd and Hiscox Syndicates Ltd are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

For further information, visit www.hiscox.com

About ELECTRA

Electra is a UK-based contemporary art agency specialising in curating, commissioning and producing ambitious cross-disciplinary projects by artists working across sound, moving image, performance and the visual arts. Projects produced and curated by ELECTRA to date include the performance programme 'Art Now Live' (2007, Tate Britain); 'The Wire 25' season of performances and events to mark The Wire Magazine's 25th anniversary (2007, London); group exhibition 'Her Noise' (2005, South London Gallery; touring 2006 - present); newly commissioned performance and film production 'Perfect Partner' by Kim Gordon, Tony Oursler and Phil Morrison's (2005, The Barbican Centre and 6 venues across the UK and Europe); Christian Marclay's performance 'Sounds Of Christmas' (2004, Tate Modern). ELECTRA is funded by Arts Council England.

For further information, visit www.electra-productions.com

The Curators

Daniel McClean is a curator and practising lawyer specialising in art law, media and intellectual property law at Withers LLP (London and New York). Lisa Rosendahl is a curator and writer. She is the Director of the Baltic Art Center in Visby, Sweden.

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