

LÉVY GORVY

## GILBERT & GEORGE WORK REUNITED FOR UNITED KINGDOM DEBUT AT LÉVY GORVY LONDON

### *Gilbert & George: The General Jungle or Carrying on Sculpting*

13 September - ~~18 November 2017~~  
Extended through 2 December 2017

22 Old Bond Street, London  
Opening Reception: 12 September, 6-8pm  
Private View with the Artists: 3 October, 6-8pm

**London, UK** — Comprised of twenty-three monumental, multi-panel pieces, *The General Jungle or Carrying on Sculpting* is one of the earliest manifestations of Gilbert & George's 'Art for All' philosophy, reinforcing their reputation as 'living sculptures'—an identity and belief maintained by the artists since they met at St Martin's School of Art, London, fifty years ago this September.

Opening at Lévy Gorvy London on 13 September, *The General Jungle or Carrying on Sculpting* will feature early charcoal-on-paper 'sculptures' by the renowned artist duo, on view in its Old Bond Street location until 2 December. This will be the first exhibition in the United Kingdom to feature this seminal body of work, which was first presented at the Sonnabend Gallery, New York, in 1971, as the atmospheric backdrop to one of their most celebrated works, *The Singing Sculpture*.

'We are thrilled to bring this important work to the United Kingdom, where the sculptures were made but have never before been exhibited,' said Lock Kresler, Senior Director of Lévy Gorvy London. 'This exhibition features loans from



IS NOT ART THE ONLY HOPE FOR THE MAKING WAY FOR THE MODERN WORLD TO ENJOY THE SOPHISTICATION OF DECADENT LIVING EXPRESSION, 1971, charcoal on paper sculpture, 110 1/4 x 177 1/8 inches (280 x 450 cm). Private collection. Photo by Stephen White. © 2017 Gilbert & George

MAXXI, Rome and The Sonnabend Collection Foundation, The Estate of Nina Sundell, and Antonio Homem, as well as other important lenders. We are especially thankful to these partners, as well as to Gilbert & George, who have been instrumental in making this reunion possible.'

### Origins and Vision

Produced in the late summer of 1971, the sheets describe a day in the life of the artists (from 'THE COLD MORNING LIGHT', through to 'THE CHILL OF EVENING'), as they walk through the leafy parks of London, ruminating on the human condition. Their thoughts range from the philosophical to the mundane, and hem each hanging, to read (in their own words) like 'huge letters', addressed with love—and humour—to the viewer. Contrary to the Minimal and Conceptual concerns dominant in art schools at the time, Gilbert & George devoted themselves to emotions rather than intellect, replacing elitist attitudes and practices towards art-making with their own Romantic, figurative idiom; by pairing inner and outer landscapes in this way, they sought to make their art accessible to the masses. As such, *The General Jungle* reads as a fragmentary anti-poem, or manifesto, in which their democratic intentions are outlined (without irony) in bold: 'WE STEP INTO THE RESPONSIBILITY SUITS OF OUR ART'. This sense of duty is further emphasised in the latter part of the work's title—*Carrying on Sculpting*—which concurrently alludes to the cult British film series *Carry On*; a knowing pop reference, to again engage the everyman, not just the elite.

### Process and Parallels

The excerpts of text originate from their own 'postal sculpture', *A Day in the Life of George & Gilbert, the sculptors* (1971), penned by the artists in Liverpool Street station and distributed by Konrad Fischer Galerie, Düsseldorf, that same year. The imagery derives from a series of photographs taken in and around Regent's Park, Colchester, and Kew Gardens—several of which were used to form the basis of their *Nature Pieces*, from 1971. Indeed, to make the *General Jungle* works, the artists projected these slides onto sheets of paper attached to the wall and copied them in charcoal, before washing them with potash to give

them an aged, antiquarian appearance. As such, they mimic the cartoon drawings traced for Italian frescoes or tapestries from Flanders, stamped with a red seal in the lower right corner to grant each the authority of an ancient manuscript or deed: a collective 'Magna Carta of Thoughts', according to their own description. In content, they parody the rich pastoral tradition of English landscape painting practiced by artists such as Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough in the eighteenth century, whilst also evoking a Biblical glimpse of Eden, as Gilbert & George amble through the gardens of London, not unlike Adam and Eve.

### **Context and Reception**

In total, Gilbert & George produced thirteen groups of Charcoal on Paper Sculptures between 1970 and 1974, with *The General Jungle* forming cycle number six. Critically, the panels were not intended to be considered for their aesthetic qualities as drawings, but were sculptures, to be interacted with—a means of communicating with the world. Following Ileana Sonnabend's invitation to present *The Singing Sculpture* at her 420 West Broadway gallery in 1971, the artists wished to leave something behind that would extend beyond their physical presence and endure after the event; *The General Jungle* was created as an immersive response to this—a unique union of art and life, that would continue to sing in their absence (to great acclaim). Visitors to Lévy Gorvy will be surrounded by all twenty-three sculptures, and invited to consider 'THE TOTAL MYSTERY OF EACH MAN-LAYED-BRICK', in this remarkable re-presentation.

### **Historic Presentations**

*The General Jungle* has previously been shown in historic presentations at the Sonnabend Gallery, New York, in 1971 and 1991; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, in 1976; the CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, in 1986; the Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK), Frankfurt, in 2000; and the Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome, in 2005.

### Exhibition Catalogue

In conjunction with the exhibition, Lévy Gorvy will publish a fully illustrated catalogue, featuring a newly commissioned essay by Michael Bracewell based on a recent interview with the artists, an original poem by Kostas Anagnopoulos, newspaper reviews from the inaugural exhibition of *The General Jungle* at the Sonnabend Gallery in 1971, and a facsimile of the postal sculpture *A Day in the Life of George & Gilbert, the sculptors* (1971).

### About the Artists

Gilbert Prousch (b. 1943, Dolomites, Italy) and George Passmore (b. 1942, Devon, England) met at St Martin's School of Art, London, in 1967. They were both enrolled in the sculpture department and formed an early alliance, in opposition to the Minimal and Conceptual ideologies prevalent among their contemporaries—developing an 'Art for All' mantra instead. They soon realised that *they* were their art, and have been operating as 'living sculptures' ever since—sacrificing their individual identities in order to devote themselves to a more democratic art practice. Working across a variety of media (with the gridded 'photo-work' becoming their signature format), they have taken *life* to be their primary subject, placing taboos such as sex, religion, race, and class at the heart of their work. In 1968, they established their studio at 12 Fournier Street in London's East End, where they continue to live and work today.

Gilbert & George were awarded the Turner Prize in 1986, and represented Great Britain at the 51<sup>st</sup> International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2005. In 2011, they received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the New Museum, New York. They have exhibited at institutions around the world, with recent presentations including *Scapegoating Pictures*, Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2017); *Luther und Die Avant Garde*, St Matthew's Church, Berlin (2017); *The Early Years*, the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015); and *The Art Exhibition*, the Museum of Old and New Art, Berriedale, Tasmania (2015). Their works can be found in the permanent collections of major international museums, including: Tate Modern, London; the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh; the Museum Ludwig, Cologne; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the Guggenheim

Museum, Bilbao; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, among many others.

### **About Lévy Gorvy**

Lévy Gorvy cultivates a programme devoted to innovation and connoisseurship in the fields of modern, postwar, and contemporary art. Formed by Dominique Lévy and Brett Gorvy, Lévy Gorvy maintains a gallery in Mayfair, London, inaugurated an expanded New York space located at 909 Madison Avenue in January 2017, and is committed to developing its programme in Asia. The gallery fosters continued dedication to the living artists and artists' estates it represents and pursues a robust programme of exhibitions and multidisciplinary events. Lévy Gorvy also produces ongoing art historical research and original scholarship, publishing exhibition catalogues, monographs, and other key publications.

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