

LONDON PICTURES by GILBERT & GEORGE

MKM Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst, Duisburg

Duration: March 20 to June 30, 2013

Private view: Sunday, March 17, 2013 / 11 am

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Completed in 2011, "London Pictures" is the title of the cycle created by the London-based artists Gilbert & George, to which the eponymous exhibition in the MKM from March 20, 2013, is dedicated. Taking as their theme the countless newsagent posters collected by the artists themselves over a period of six years, the artists compile a detailed inventory of quotidian human behaviour, which they then submit to their hallmark humanistic gaze, and in so doing, furnish their own perspective on the psycho-social condition of our Western societies. What emerges is an extensive series of images from which the MKM is, for the first time, showcasing 70 individual pictures and affording visitors the opportunity to intensively explore this new phase from the oeuvre of Gilbert & George.

In their "London Pictures" Gilbert & George have collated the newspaper posters, which, not only in London, but across England, garnish the sales stands of the newspaper dealers. Their explicit allusions to the most titillating, violent and bizarre stories of the day are designed to entice potential customers to buy the newspapers. These simple statements of facts promise tales of love and sex, violence and death, wealth and power - themes, which have fascinated humanity since time immemorial, and which expose our endless appetite for sensation, disaster and excess. Gilbert & George have taken 3712 images of these advertising posters, processed the material, arranged it according to themes and fashioned it into 292 carefully-created pictures. Not only are the artists documenting a commonly-used device within the marketing strategies of the Western press, they are also exploring its impact on both the individual and society as a whole, and applying artistic means to articulate their own response to, and perception of, this social phenomenon. "The »London Pictures« should not in the first instance be read as a critique of the media, but perhaps as a critique of ourselves", explains MKM Director Walter Smerling, adding that: "Gilbert & George borrow the language of the media, place it in a different context and in so doing transform these newspapers posters into a new entity vested with an entirely new content. The careful collation and arrangement of hundreds of headlines (...) forges a platform for reflection which casts the spotlight on to our own complicity, intrigues and problems of existence".

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The artists of course feature in their pictures: in the background as a pair of quizzical, piercing eyes or as a ubiquitous, immaculately besuited presence, appearing "(...) as though the artists were psychic manifestations of the city itself, its sense of place and history. The 'LONDON PICTURES' comprise both a directory of quotidian urban human behavior – revealing and shocking and violent, in all its sluggish or volatile momentum – and as such the city's moral portrait: an unflinching audit of modern western society's relationship to itself, stripped of rhetoric or intellectual disguise." (Michael Bracewell, author of the catalogue). Yet beyond focussing on the city of London itself, Gilbert & George also cast themselves directly as integral constituents of our society's media landscape and its psychic condition. Their unrelenting gaze interrogates not only the message of the posters, but is trained at the observer who also becomes an essential part of each and every picture.

Gilbert & George are seeking to portray the "grandeur, mystery and drama" of our Western world. From competitions to find the cutest child to gruesome tales of murder and mayhem - the whole gamut of human experience is represented here and exercises an equally ineluctable fascination on readers in Germany: For as the artists themselves remark, the "London Pictures" and "London Problems" could just as easily be "Duisburg Pictures" and "Duisburg Problems".

Biography

Gilbert (born in 1943 in St. Martin in Thurn, Italy) studied at the Wolkenstein School of Art in South Tyrol, the Hallein School of Art in Austria, and the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, before attending St. Martin's School of Art in London. There, in 1967, he met George (born in 1942 in Plymouth, UK), who had previously been a student at Dartington Hall College of Art and Oxford Art School. During the 1960s, Gilbert & George expanded the concept of sculpture by making themselves the materials for their art, as Living Sculptures. They declared everyday activities to be art, and provoked opposition by using faeces, urine and sperm as principal motifs in their picture series. They were awarded the 1986 Turner Prize, exhibited in the British Pavilion at the 2005 Venice Biennale, and has held exhibitions in venues ranging from the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1971 and 1996) to Guggenheim Museum, New York (1985), Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville, Paris (1997) and London's Tate Modern (2007). Other major public exhibitions have been mounted in Russia (1990) and China (1993).

Catalogue

Accompanying the exhibition is a comprehensive catalogue containing illustrations of the entire cycle, a foreword by Walter Smerling and a detailed introduction by Michael Bracewell (326 pages, 292 coloured plates, softcover, bound, 27.00 euro (museum edition) / Hurtwood Press, Oxted, Surrey, Great Britain, 2013, ISBN 978-0-903696-46-3).

Press images are available for free download at:

<http://www.museum-kueppersmuehle.de/en/press/images/gilbert-george-london-pictures/>

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Opening Hours / Guided tours:

Wed 2.00 pm – 6.00 pm

Thu - Sun 11.00 am - 6.00 pm

Bank Holidays 11.00 am – 6.00 pm

Guided tours every Sunday at 3 pm

Free admission for children and school pupils

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