

Press Release

Gilbert & George
THE PARADISICAL PICTURES
April 28–August 25, 2021
Sprüth Magers, Berlin

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Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are pleased to announce British artist duo Gilbert & George's first exhibition at the Berlin gallery. On view are twenty-five large-scale works from the artists' *THE PARADISICAL PICTURES* (2019) series.

The pictures show Gilbert & George wandering through paradisiacal natural worlds filled with mostly expressionistically-hued fruits, flowers, leaves, and trees. Each one is a cosmos in itself; together they form a spectacular vision of paradise that is at once lush and fantastic, with hallucinatory and psychedelic elements.

Some works find the artists symbiotically merging with the natural world. *BED-WETTING* and *CURL* feature their disembodied eyes, noses, and mouths emerging ghost-like from layers of leaves to gaze piercingly at the viewer. In other pictures, they move – sometimes awkwardly dance – through sumptuous landscapes, as in *DATE STONES* or *TENDER*, for example. *DATE STONE HEADS* and *DATE HEADS* show Gilbert & George becoming part of the plant kingdom themselves, here in the form of dates and date stones bearing their facial features. The choice of fruit is significant: While dates are associated with sensuality and are said to boost both libido and sexual desire, date stones have a look reminiscent of human excrement and feces. The artist duo has already addressed such socially taboo aspects of being human in their *NAKED SHIT PICTURES* (1994).

Common to all the pictures is the motif of blossoming in nature – a joyful event further emphasized by the bright colors. Yet a closer look reveals that the flowers have faded; leaves glow in autumnal hues or lie withered on the ground; fruits have dried; the duo's poses exude exhaustion and fatigue. Autumnal scenes of nature can be interpreted as a metaphor for the autumn of life, an eternal cycle of passing and reawakening. The works also allude to the process of aging, to the confrontation with one's own transience – a theme all the more omnipresent and palpable in the wake of a deadly global pandemic.

Completed in 2019, Gilbert & George's studies of the relationship between humans and nature take on new relevance and significance in the current context. The artists present a vision of paradise that is ultimately transcendental – a representation of how we might situate ourselves in the modern world, but also how we can change for the

better.

Gilbert & George (*1943, San Martin de Tor; *1942, Plymouth) met as students at St Martin's School of Art in London in 1967 and have collaborated ever since. Recent solo exhibitions include those at Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2021); Kunsthalle Zurich (2020); Fondation Louis-Vuitton, Paris; and Moderna Museet, Stockholm (both 2019); Helsinki Art Museum (2018); Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest (2017); Museum of Old and New Art, Tasmania (2016); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015); Nouveau Musée National de Monaco (2014); Deichtorhallen Hamburg (2011); Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdansk (2011); Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (2010); De Young Museum, San Francisco (2008); Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin (2008); Brooklyn Museum, New York (2008); and Tate Modern, London (2007). Gilbert & George represented Great Britain at the 51st Venice Biennale in 2005. Group exhibitions include those at The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2020); The Warehouse, Dallas (2017); The Jewish Museum, New York (2016); The Drawing Center, New York (2016); Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz (2014); Nottingham Contemporary (2014); Institute of Contemporary Art, London (2013); Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2013); Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha (2012); Gropius Bau, Berlin (2012); Hong Kong Heritage Museum (2011); and Kunsthaus Zurich (2011).

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For further information and press inquiries, please contact Felix Lorenz-Wohnhas (felix@spruethmagers.com).

Opening hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm