

Felix Gonzalez-Torres

Somewhere better than this place / Nowhere better than this place

November 19, 2025–February 14, 2026
5–6/F, H Queen's, 80 Queen's Road Central, Central, Hong Kong



Felix Gonzalez-Torres, "Untitled" (Couple), 1993 (detail).
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Image courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to announce *Somewhere better than this place / Nowhere better than this place*, the first exhibition of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's (1957–1996) work in Hong Kong. Gonzalez-Torres was one of the most significant artists to emerge in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In its reduced formal vocabulary, conceptual rigor, and evocative use of everyday materials, his work resonates with meaning that is at once specific and mutable, rigorous and generous, poetic and political.

Featuring examples from key bodies of work by the artist, this presentation will also extend beyond the gallery into the city, and will seek to draw out the deep resonances between Gonzalez-Torres's practice and the city's complex urban fabric, historical trajectory, and evolving identity. Hong Kong—a place shaped by histories of passage and transformation—mirrors many of the complexities the artist explored throughout his work, which sought to question and collapse dualities such as belonging and estrangement, the particular and the universal, the individual and the collective, and the fixed and the fleeting.

Simultaneous manifestations of candy and stack works in the show will be displayed at significant sites around the city, exploring the complex relationships and negotiations between private and public space, and intimacy and anonymity, that informed Gonzalez-Torres's practice. By embedding the artist's work within Hong Kong's urban environment and daily rhythms, this project brings into question notions of access, who constitutes the public, and what defines public versus private space. The synchronous installations moreover speak to the

continued mutability and openness of Gonzalez-Torres's work: responsive to different contexts, it welcomes the possibility of holding multiple, evolving meanings at once.

Upon entering the gallery, the viewer will encounter the artist's *"Untitled" (Fear)* (1991), a blue-tinted mirror that at once invites self-confrontation while reflecting and altering the surrounding space in its cerulean cast. Through its evocations of doubling, place and placelessness, presence and specter, the work establishes the open-ended, generative propositions that characterize the artist's work.

Also on view will be the double paper stack *"Untitled"* (1989/1990) from which the exhibition takes its title. The work's quiet, declarative phrases—"Somewhere better than this place." printed on the sheets of one of the adjacent stacks, and on the other "Nowhere better than this place."—conjure a grappling with duality, hope, endurance, and the everyday labor of making meaning in the world as it is, while gesturing toward what it could become.

This work will also be manifested within the Central Market Stairwell, an iconic architectural site from the late 1930s and one of the earliest examples of Bauhaus architecture in Asia. The historic Central Market was once the city's first wet market and now one of the business district's most popular thoroughfares. In this context, the presence of the double stack *"Untitled"* becomes a site for negotiating the boundaries of public space itself: who it is for, how it is used, and what kind of meaning can be made or encountered within it. The prescribed flow of people in this space—the stairwell is physically demarcated between ascending and descending sides—dovetails with the double stack itself and the choice the individual makes in taking one of the sheets. The tension espoused by the inscriptions also draws connections to the Bauhaus, whose thinkers and ideological underpinnings embraced the utopian possibilities within the present while looking to the future. This manifestation of *"Untitled"* in a context where it may not readily appear to be a work of art, and free of overt indication of how and why it has been installed in this site, may elicit drastically different responses from passersby—thus embracing Gonzalez-Torres's willingness to put his work's status as art *per se* into question. Creating structures that endowed unique works with the capacity to exist in more than one place simultaneously, Gonzalez-Torres was unafraid of challenging his work's ability to endure—despite differences in how it may vary or be perceived from one context to another. When the work was first shown in 1990, he wrote: "I feel this particular installation is about vulnerability, about having nothing to lose, about the possibility of renewal through the recontextualization of each piece every time it's taken by the viewer. It is also a comment on the passage of time and on the possibility of erasure and disappearance, it is about the poetics of space, presence, and the beauty of chance."¹

In another gallery room will be *"Untitled" (Couple)* (1993), one of Gonzalez-Torres's unique light string sculptures. As with the candy and paper stack works, Gonzalez-Torres's use of light strings exemplifies his interest in the poetic potential of commonplace materials. The nature of the artist's light-string works entails that bulbs be promptly replaced when they burn out—perhaps on one string, perhaps on the other—at once evoking loss and perpetual renewal. Its presence carries particular resonance in Hong Kong, a city characterized by constant rebuilding and flux.

A selection of photographic works and puzzles expands these meditations. Among them is *"Untitled,"* (1994), composed of a group of four black-and-white framed photographs depicting a trail of clouds with birds soaring in the sky. The motif of birds in flight—as well as clouds—was a recurring one in the artist's work, and he employed related imagery in varying formats. Such visuals allude to themes of migration, belonging, and the transcendence of fixed boundaries. With the flight of birds, Gonzalez-Torres gives us an understated yet profound symbol of freedom and possibility. Other photographs of footprints in sand, a recurring image found in several of the artist's works that stands as a compelling yet understated index of presence and absence, and of the ephemeral and the perpetual.

A selection of jigsaw puzzle works with a range of photographic imagery will be included, among them works featuring images of crowds, drawing connection to the city's physical density, and its broader questions of individuality, collectivity, and visibility.

In the final room of the exhibition space will be "*Untitled*" (*Welcome Back Heroes*) (1991), which will also be manifested simultaneously in a public setting. As with all of Gonzalez-Torres's candy works, in which viewers are welcome to choose to take and consume a piece, "*Untitled*" (*Welcome Back Heroes*) evokes experiences of what it means to take on the responsibility to engage, while exploring ideas of disappearance and renewal, abundance and loss. While the artist chose Bazooka bubblegum for the original installation of this work, the nature of his candy works allows for different decisions to be made each time the works are installed. Reflecting on the work's militaristic title as well as the artist's original choice of candy—with its red, white, and blue wrappers featuring vintage American Cold War-era cartoons—the candies here have red, white, and blue cellophane wrappers, opening the work to multiple, open-ended political and cultural meanings in an interconnected, globalized world. The work will also be on view on a public street corner in the city's Tai Hang neighborhood. Dense with narrow streets and alleyways, the area is close to the busy commercial district of Causeway Bay and is home to traditional communities, historical sites interwoven with bars, cafes, and shops. This constantly changing enclave is situated precariously between tradition and gentrification, past and future. The work's presence in these contrasting settings introduces new layers of meaning, further shaped by the shifting dynamics of access and attention, passivity and participation, the movement of bodies amidst the flow of daily life within a city in a state of evolution.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres (1957–1996) was an American artist born in Guáimaro, Cuba. He lived and worked in New York City between 1979 and 1995. Gonzalez-Torres died in Miami on January 9, 1996 from AIDS-related causes. He began his art studies at the University of Puerto Rico before moving to New York City, where he attended the Whitney Independent Study Program, first in 1981 and again in 1983. He received his BFA from Pratt Institute, New York, in 1983 and his MFA from the International Center of Photography and New York University in 1987.

From 1987 to 1991, Gonzalez-Torres was a part of the artist collective Group Material, whose collaborative, politically informed practice focused on community engagement and activist interventions. In 1988, he had his first one-man exhibitions, at the Rastovski Gallery, New York, INTAR Gallery, New York, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. His earliest billboard work, "*Untitled*" (1989), was installed at New York's Sheridan Square on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion. In 1990, a solo presentation of Gonzalez-Torres's work served as the inaugural exhibition of the Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

Notable shows during his lifetime include *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Traveling*, a survey that was presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, and the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago in 1994. In 1995, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, organized an international traveling retrospective of his work, which was subsequently presented at Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain (1995–1996) and Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1996).

In 1997, the Sprengel Museum Hannover, Germany, organized a traveling posthumous exhibition and published a catalogue raisonné of the artist's work. The exhibition traveled to Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland (1997) and Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna (1998). In the subsequent decade, further solo exhibitions of the artist's work were presented at institutions worldwide. Gonzalez-Torres

was selected to represent the United States at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007.

In 2010–2011, WIELS Contemporary Art Center, Brussels, organized a six-part traveling retrospective, *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Specific Objects without Specific Form*, which was also presented at the Fondation Beyeler, Basel, and Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt. At each institution, Elena Filipovic curated a retrospective version of the exhibition which was reconsidered midway through its run by a collaborating artist-curator: Danh Vo, Carol Bove, and Tino Sehgal, respectively. Other exhibitions include those held at PLATEAU and Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea (2012); Metropolitan Arts Centre, Belfast, Northern Ireland (2015); and Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, China (2016).

Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Summer was on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto in 2022. Also in 2022, The two-person presentation, *Felix Gonzalez-Torres – Roni Horn*, was presented at the Bourse de Commerce–Pinault Collection, Paris. The first major solo presentation of the artist's work in Washington, DC, in over 30 years, *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Always to Return*, was held at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery and Archives of American Art, Washington, DC, in 2024–2025. In May 2026, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, will open the solo exhibition *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Sweet Revenge*.

In 2017, David Zwirner announced that the gallery would be joining Andrea Rosen Gallery in co-representing the estate of Gonzalez-Torres. The announcement was accompanied by a solo exhibition of the artist's work at David Zwirner New York. The gallery also presented a solo exhibition of work by Gonzalez-Torres in New York in 2023.

Work by the artist is held in significant institutional collections worldwide, among them The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate, United Kingdom; Whitney Museum of American Art; Fondation Beyeler, Basel; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas; Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst, Oslo; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; La Colección Jumex, Mexico City; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Pérez Art Museum Miami; Philadelphia Art Museum; Sprengel Museum Hannover, Hanover; and Vancouver Art Gallery.

Notes

1. From the press release, written by Gonzalez-Torres, for his inaugural exhibition at Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, 1990, where this work was first shown.

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