

GLADSTONE

Rirkrit Tiravanija's Exhibition of New Works Opens this November at Gladstone in Brussels

Solo presentation comprises seven new works exploring today's social and political crises through the lens of Philip Guston's approach to painting

For his third solo exhibition at Gladstone, (*the intellectuals take leave*), Rirkrit Tiravanija presents seven new paintings on newspapers that reflect on global crises and American political upheaval. Inspired by the practice of the late Canadian-American artist Philip Guston, the new works build upon Tiravanija's ongoing, multidisciplinary exploration of civil unrest and social issues. (*the intellectuals take leave*) is on view in Brussels from November 5 to December 20, 2025.

Protest lies at the heart of Rirkrit Tiravanija's multidisciplinary and participatory art. In 2001, he inaugurated an ongoing series called *demonstration drawings*, for which he invited a group of young Thai artists to render graphite facsimiles of photographs from the *International Herald Tribune* documenting outbreaks of civil unrest around the world. Images range from violent street protests in Bangkok to Parisians marching in solidarity with *Charlie Hebdo* to members of Occupy Wall Street demanding economic equity. While public protests have deep historical roots—in the United States they are associated with the civil rights activism of the 1960s—Tiravanija's project underscores the continued relevance of protest in today's political climate. In 2018, two years into the first Trump presidency, he turned to newspapers again, this time as backdrops for an extraordinary series of paintings in which elements from Philip Guston's late, figurative canvases were interpreted and transposed onto grids made from sheets of newsprint. Pages from *The New York Times*, covering the election of 2016 and the turmoil wrought by Trump's anti-immigration policies, created new context for Guston's own critical response to Nixon's administration in the 1970s and the social inequity in the U.S at the time. Tiravanija created a parallel series of paintings layering Gustonian figuration over pages from the *Bangkok Post*, working into and around the current political unrest in his native country.

In these new works, Tiravanija inhabits the extremity of Guston's figurative vocabulary and explores political unrest in America. Whereas in the initial series, the artist borrowed and remixed the iconic imagery from Guston—shoes, walls, bottles, piles of limbs, burning cigarettes—here, some of the

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compositions are only evocative of Guston's troll-ish style. What he does invoke, however, is Guston's deep lamentation over the state of the world, distraught as he was with the corruption and social injustices of the 1970s filtered through his own early critiques of fascism and racism as a muralist during the 1930s. In seven paintings, Tiravanija depicts figures from behind, various archetypes grasping the tools of their trade, as if fleeing their surroundings in a hurry, taking as much as possible of their particular paraphernalia. We see an architect, engineer, scientist, doctor, teacher, judge, and artist in retreat, seeking escape from the assault on independent, progressive thought in the United States under the Trump Administration and its enactment of the ultra-conservative agenda known as Project 2025. With pages from *The New York Times* announcing Trump's return to power and his undermining of all democratic norms, Tiravanija creates searing depictions of the country's brain drain as intellectuals flee an encroaching autocracy and its dire implications for the freedom of expression. In a related work, *untitled 2025 (the intellectual takes leave no. one)* (*new york times*, november 22, 2016), Tiravanija has rendered a headless figure in a large overcoat holding piles of rock-like forms, weighed down in a state of hopelessness.

Other paintings on view borrow more directly from Guston's inventory of abbreviated items—clocks, clouds, shoes, and the like—to invoke, like the series preceding it, despair at the injustices being enacted in the name of governance. As Tiravanija explained in an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist in *Flash Art* in 2024: "Guston was one of those artists who always seemed significant for me, particularly regarding the practice. Then Donald Trump comes along with all his hateful and divisive rhetoric. This pointed me towards Guston, who was perhaps misunderstood in some ways... For me, there were elements in Guston's work that resonated deeply with the situation that we were facing under Donald Trump's administration, especially considering Guston's amazing Nixon work. Trump's actions, such as building the wall and denying entry to people from Arab countries, as well as the movement of lawyers trying to help people cross the border, inspired me to... support the cause." This new body of work marks a continuation of Tiravanija's collaboration with the ethos and the ethics of Guston's most celebrated and controversial paintings. He layers their continued relevance with the relevance of today's social and political crises, which we are witnessing in real time broadcast across social media platforms and cable television, but most germane here, in the pages of our daily newspapers.

Exhibition Details

Rirkrit Tiravanija

(the intellectuals take leave)

November 5 – December 20, 2025

Opening reception: November 5, 6–10pm

Groteherestraat 12 Rue du Grand Cerf
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About Rirkrit Tiravanija

Rirkrit Tiravanija' (b. 1967) lives and works in New York, Berlin, and Chiang Mai. While his participatory installations construct communal environments for visitors to participate in quotidian activities and suffuse art objects with life gained through use, his prints and paintings transform ephemeral moments of social strife into documents of political aspiration. A pioneer of "relational aesthetics," his work invites viewers to step out of their habitual roles as observers and become participants. As he put it, "The point is not to see, but to be there."

His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions including: Gropius Bau, Berlin; MoMA PS1, Queens, New York (2023, traveled to LUMA Arles, France 2024); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2023, 2022); Institute of Contemporary Arts London (permanent installation), Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian, Washington D.C. (2019), the National Gallery of Singapore (2018); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2016); the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2015), the Kunsthalle Bielefeld (2010), the Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel (2009), the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Serpentine Gallery in London (2005), as well as the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (2004). Tiravanija's work has been recognized with numerous awards and grants including the 2010 Absolut Art Award, the 2004 Hugo Boss Prize awarded by the Guggenheim Museum, and the 2003 Smithsonian American Art Museum's Lucelia Artist Award.

Tiravanija is on the faculty of the School of Visual Arts at Columbia University and is a founding member and curator of Utopia Station, a collective project of artists, art historians, and curators. Tiravanija is also President of an educational ecological project known as The Land Foundation, located in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and is part of a collective alternative space called VER in Bangkok.

About Gladstone Gallery

Gladstone Gallery is known for its commitment to artists whose prescient approaches and experimental practices have defined the contours of contemporary art. The gallery has long been an active partner in the cultivation of iconoclastic careers, fostering a roster of artists recognized for their groundbreaking contributions. Headquartered in New York and including outposts in both Brussels and Seoul, Gladstone's impact extends globally, enabling both the presentation of new bodies of work, and an amplification of the international reach of its artists. Alongside its work with contemporary artists,

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the gallery is steward to the legacies of pivotal historical artists and serves as an advocate for the enduring power of art. Gladstone is led by a team of partners who spearhead its long-term vision and program, building on the values of its founder Barbara Gladstone.

Press Contact

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