

# MAI 36 GALERIE

## General Idea

**Opening:** Thursday, January 17, 2019, 6-8 p.m.  
**Exhibition:** January 18 – March 2, 2019  
**Hours:** Tues-Fri 11 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., Sat 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Mai 36 Galerie is delighted to present another exhibition of works by the Canadian group General Idea, which was founded in Toronto in 1969 by AA Bronson, Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal and operated as an internationally active artist collective until the mid-90s. Both Partz and Zontal died in 1994 of AIDS-related causes.

With their media-related conceptual art, General Idea took a satirical approach to the existing norms of the art world, media culture and consumerism. Their involvement from the early 1970s onwards in arenas such as punk, queer theory and AIDS activism brought them international acclaim. As key figures in the conceptual art scene of the time, they used a variety of media and platforms, creating a diverse oeuvre that included installations, performances, photography, works on canvas, videos and drawings as well as magazines, multiples, editions, postcards, posters, wallpapers and more. Performance played an important role in their work, including beauty contests, television talk-shows and trade fair pavilions. As pioneers of early conceptual and media-specific art, the group is widely recognized as a model for artist-initiated activities and continues to this day to influence younger generations of artists.

The exhibition at Mai 36 Galerie shows works from a number of series, including *Great AIDS*. During the 1980s and 1990s, when the subject of HIV/AIDS was very much taboo in wider society, General Idea were at the vanguard of an activist art movement that addressed the subject directly. The resultant body of work became a crucial aspect of their output for the rest of their career. Their AIDS and Imagevirus works are an appropriation and subversion of Robert Indiana's 1966 work *LOVE*, substituting the letters L-O-V-E with A-I-D-S. *AIDS* (1987-88), which can be seen in the exhibition, is a screenprint version of General Idea's first experiment with this theme. Visiting Germany, they made a pilgrimage to Robert Indiana's *Great LOVE* at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, and it became the source for a new series of General Idea works. General Idea's *AIDS Scarf* edition was the first of these, launched in 1991 for the German AIDS Foundation (again, General Idea replaced *LOVE* with *AIDS*). The series of paintings featured in this exhibition, titled *Great AIDS*, complete the series of paintings conceived at the time.

Through these diverse forms of expression, General Idea works reflect many different aspects of social and media critique that continue to have relevance today. Even now, in 2018, the AIDS pandemic continues to grow: 40 million people across the world are living with HIV.

The works were last shown in the exhibition *General Idea: Broken Time/Tiempo Partido* at the Museo Jumex in Mexico City and the MALBA in Buenos Aires and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa is organizing a major retrospective for 2021. Their works are present in the collections of numerous renowned institutions worldwide, such as the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa and the Tate Gallery in London. Mai 36 Galerie has been showing General Idea since 1988.

**Opening on Thursday, January 17, 2019 from 6 to 8 p.m.. AA Bronson will be present.**

Visual materials available on request ([office@mai36.com](mailto:office@mai36.com)).

We look forward to seeing you at the gallery and thank you for your interest.

Mai 36 Galerie

Victor Gisler

January 2019