

Gilbert & George to be awarded at the Florence Biennale

The acclaimed artists Gilbert & George will be awarded the Lorenzo il Magnifico prize at the Florence Biennale of Contemporary Art in December 2007

(Florence - Italy, 18th May 2007) The sixth edition of the **Florence Biennale of Contemporary Art** will take place at the historic Fortezza da Basso from 1st - 9th December, 2007. This year's edition will include, as honoured guests, the acclaimed artists Gilbert & George and from the White Cube Gallery London, Tim Marlow. Gilbert & George will be awarded the Lorenzo il Magnifico prize on 4th December.

On the successful wave of their exhibition at the Tate Gallery in London, Gilbert & George will come to Florence together with Tim Marlow, exhibitions director of the White Cube Gallery London, founder of the *Tate Magazine*, collaborator on Channel Five, where he presents a program on current exhibitions. Tim Marlow has published several books and important artists monographs such as Auguste Rodin and Egon Schiele. He writes for various magazines and newspapers such as *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent on Sunday*, *Art Monthly*, etc.

Gilbert & George will meet the 800 artists participating at the Biennale and visitors to the Biennale, as part of the rich calendar of conferences, meetings, video-projections. A video-documentary produced by Gilbert & George will be shown during the Florence Biennale and Tim Marlow along with Gilbert & George will give a talk about their life and work.

Since 2001, the Biennale, collaborates with the United Nations, as an official participant of the *Dialogue Among Nations program*. Former Secretary General Kofi Annan wrote in support of the program:

I believe that dialogue is an opportunity for people who come from diverse cultures and traditions to know each other better whether they live on opposite sides of the world or on the same street.

The International Scientific Committee, composed of 20 qualified members, chooses the artists and places their work into one of the categories: painting, sculpture, graphic art, mixed media, installation pieces, photography and digital art. The selection is decided upon with no prejudice towards style. The artists are selected based on the quality of their artwork and the cultural values their work represents. The **International Jury** that assigns recognitions and awards to the invited artists is composed of distinguished figures such Emmanuel von Lauenstein Massarani, artistic director of The Biennale; Stefano Francolini, Art Historian and Critic, Direttore settore restauro Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence, Italy; David Rubin, Curator of The Brown Foundation of Contemporary Art, San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas, USA; Elza Ajzenberg, Professor of Art and Communication, Director of The Mac, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sao Paulo, Brazil; R.B. Bhaskaran, Chairman of Lalit Kala Akademi, National Academy of Art, India; Rosa Tejada, Educator

Metropolitan Museum New York, USA; Gregorio Luke, director of Molaa, Latin American art museum Long Beach California, USA; Dominique Edouard Bachelier, art history teacher and art critic, Paris, France; Pasquale Celona President of the Biennale and President of the International Jury, Italy, Piero Celona, Vicepresident of the Biennale and Public Relations Manager, Italy.

The Florence Biennale is organized by Arte Studio (www.florencebiennale.org).

Political ambassador and Artistic Director of the Parliament Museum in San Paolo, Brazil **Emmanuel von Lauenstein Massarani is the 2007 Biennale Director**. Massarani has replaced John T. Spike in the role, who determined the fundamental philosophy of the Biennale, and in turn, its success.

Gilbert & George

In Carter Ratcliff's "Gilbert & George: The Complete Pictures 1971-1985", (London, 1986) Gilbert & George stated "We want Our Art to speak across the barriers of knowledge directly to People about their life and not about their knowledge of art... The content of mankind is our subject and our inspiration. We stand each day for good traditions and necessary changes. We want to find and accept all the good and bad in ourselves".

Gilbert & George met at St Martin's School of Art, London in 1967 and have been one artist ever since exhibiting for the first time together in 1969 at the Nigel Greenwood Gallery London, with "Singing Sculpture". They referred to themselves not as performance artists but as "Living Sculptures" and their "responsibility suits", the almost, ill-fitting sixties style suits which have become emblematic of part of their image, were part of the "living sculpture" that they embodied.

In the 1970's Gilbert & George turned towards creating their own black and white photographic images. They almost always depicted themselves in a grid format along with aspects of the east end of London where they live: faces, buildings and graffiti, "Smash the Reds", 1977 or "Bummed", 1977 where there is also a political aspect and the important introduction of the colour red. In "Prick Ass", 1977 film clips of a homeless alcoholic are inserted into the multi part image: this interrelationship with people and architecture stress the images of anger, loneliness and destruction and are further highlighted by this use of red.

In the 1980's where their subject matter expanded to include sex, religion, nature, fear, racial differences and politics, their sumptuous works became brightly multi-coloured. They once stated "when we are working we have our brain, our soul and our sex. These are the things that we work with. Sometimes we do a picture more for sex, sometimes more for our brain and sometimes more for our spirit. It's always with a combination of those three that we work. The whole of civilisation continues because of those driving forces". (Ratcliff, "Gilbert and George: The Complete Pictures 1971-1985", London, 1986). Indeed, these photographic works continue to be placed within a framed grid, which lends to convey the image more forcefully to the viewer. The idea of natural division in the world is important to

the artists who, when talking about the grid aspect of their works, have given the examples of house being made up of bricks or a week of days.

Gilbert & George represented Great Britain at the Biennale di Venezia in 2005 with a new group of paintings, "Thirteen Hooligan Pictures" (2004) and Perverse Pictures (2004). Indeed "Six Bomb Pictures: Terror" their most recent work from 2006 continues to affront current affairs and political issues.

Such is Gilbert & George's commitment to their art that they have continued to adopt this persona of living art in their everyday lives: in their normal but formal way of dressing, their name and address being in the phone book, they are thought to have been seen on the London bus, in their measured formality, aspects that in today's celebrities you rarely see.

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