

TEMPLON

II

Press release

June 9, 2020

PIERRE ET GILLES

Motionless wanderings

10 September – 31 October 2020

Opening: 10th September, 5.30 to 8.00 pm



La reine des océans, 2020

This autumn, Pierre et Gilles are presenting at Galerie Templon's Rue Beaubourg space, a set of works created over the past two years.

Famed for their iconic portraits fusing painting and photography that they have been creating for the past 40 years, the duo is unveiling their most introspective and critical work to date. For the exhibition, they use their astute observations of society to concoct bittersweet pieces that reflect the contradictions of our era.

The exhibition opens with a self-portrait created in the studio during the lockdown: *Bonjour Pierre et Gilles* pays tribute to Gustave Courbet's painting *Bonjour Monsieur Courbet*. It shows the couple wandering on a bucolic path, lost among housing estates and residential suburbs. Thugs, scrap metal dealers, homeless people, Yellow Vest protestors? With a knowing look and their trademark benevolence, Pierre et Gilles invite us into their unique universe, an artificial world as wondrous as it is disturbing.

Pierre et Gilles use a technique that has become well-known. They work together devising and building hand-crafted sets combining a plethora of accessories with the complex interplay light and of tulle textiles. Pierre, the photographer, oversees the photoshoot and Gilles, the painter, then steps in, applying his brush meticulously. The image's entire surface slowly

morphs into a painting before being enclosed in an original frame, created by the artists, that acts as an extension of the photograph.

As with the discreet influence of Gustave Courbet, art history and the iconography of classical art are never far away. The new exhibition features a series of portraits, sometimes in the form of Madonnas or saints. There is no irony here. The notion of the icon, a recurrent motif in their work since the 1980s, shines a light on the majesty of the forgotten martyrs and heroes of daily life. A black virgin is succeeded by blooming Madonna; and a young African immigrant, a street-seller of miniature Eiffel Towers. A sweet mixt couple contrasts with a young freshman wearing only a trash bag daubed with insults.

This constellation of exceedingly diverse portraits is shot through with a message that is both subtly engaged. Pierre et Gilles have chosen to end the exhibition with a collection of works centring on the sea and the underwater world that is increasingly under threat. Using litter gathered on the beaches of Le Havre, Gilles's hometown, they have created fantastical scenes in subaquatic kingdoms. The astonishingly inventive and beautiful results seem to offer a troubled statement about the changes the world is undergoing. As always, Pierre et Gilles denounce without accusing.

Internationally renowned artists Pierre et Gilles have been producing works together since 1976, creating a world where painting and photography meet. Their art has been the focus of numerous major exhibitions, including a retrospective at the Maison européenne de la photographie in 1996, New York's New Museum in 2000, Museum of Contemporary Art in Shanghai in 2005 and Jeu de Paume in Paris in 2007. In 2017, a retrospective entitled *Clair-Obscur* was held at the Brussels Musée d'Ixelles before moving to MuMa in Le Havre. By the end of 2019, two major exhibitions, *Factory of Idols*, at the Cité de la Musique - Philharmonie de Paris and *Le goût du cinéma* at the Centre d'art La Malmaison in Cannes met with remarkable public and critical acclaim. This year, their work has been presented as part of group exhibitions in *Bye Bye future! L'art de voyager dans le temps* at the Musée royal of Mariemont, Morlanwelz (Belgium) through October 25; *Cœurs, Du romantisme dans l'art contemporain* at the Musée de la Vie romantique through September 13; *Narcisse ou la floraison des mondes* at the Frac Nouvelle-Aquitaine MÉCA through August 23; *Thierry Mugler : Couturissime* at Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, Munich (Germany) through the end of summer; *Christian Louboutin, L'Exhibition(nist)* at the Palais de la Porte Dorée through January 3, 2021; *Hortus conclusus. L'illusion d'un paradis* at Museo Villa dei Cedri (Switzerland) through November 8, and in *#cute. Islands of Bliss?* at the NRW-Forum Dusseldorf from October 8, 2020 through January 10, 2021.