

At Astrup Fearnley Museet there is a big solo show dedicated to the eccentric artistic duo...



With the incredible curatorialship of Daniel Birnbaum and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Astrup Fearnley Museum in Oslo is now hosting (until 5 January 2020) a big anthology titled “The great exhibition” dedicated to the eccentric Italian-British artistic duo, Gilbert & George. Not forgetting a pinch of Irony, social criticism, and coloured images, the Norwegian Museum is showing a half-century of co-produced works, created by the artists between 1971 to 2016.

Both specialized in the most controversial mass communication, Gilbert & George met each other during their academical studies at Saint Martin’s School of Art and Design (London). One born in 1943 in the Italian Dolomites (Gilbert), the other in 1942 in Plymouth, UK (George); it’s about a duo that never stopped to believe in a provocative art, in a media that could have challenged the conventions between art and society... As stated by the artists: “to reveal the inner-bigotry in the libertarian, and conversely to reveal the inner-libertarianism in the bigot.”

In the displayed artistic path become evident artist’s interested in Warhol’s seriality teachings, and on the political revolution of sixty-eight. In fact, the exhibition starts from 1971, year in which the production of Gilbert & George was focused on issues related to a reality in rapid change, together with a reflection on what was happened in the city of London: a new melting pot of cultures and different religious currents, politic, literature and music. Then, an important jump to the eighties a decade dominated by the kitsch, AIDS, Reagan hedonism and Margaret Thatcher’s liberal politics. This is also the period where the art market explodes by engulfing the latest ideals. Moreover, in these years IRA guerrillas shake England and throw it into a nightmare that costs the country dozens of civilian victims, especially young.

“For over half a century, they have been among the most visible artists on the planet. This is not surprising since the recurring themes in their art could not be more fundamental to us humans: politics, religion, sexuality and beauty. Ultimately, what their art is about is human life itself.”

(Daniel Birnbaum and Hans Ulrich Obrist)



Gilbert & George, The great exhibition, Installation view of Astrup Fearnley Museet. Photo by Christian Øen.



Gilbert & George, The great exhibition, Installation view of Astrup Fearnley Museet. Photo by Christian Øen.

Once the excesses of the Eighties have passed, the human body becomes the object of the duo's artistic research, not only from the point of view of sexuality, anatomy and biology. Between provocation and ostentation, against the background of many advertising campaigns, the body becomes a fetish, a toy, a curious object, in grotesque scales and shapes, on the edge of exhibitionism. Finally, by following the 2005 attacks in London, current events are again the protagonist in Gilbert & George works, that try to tell the meaning of fear, as well as the difficulty of dialogue between very different civilizations. Find more information by visiting the Astrup Fearnley Museet Website.

Cover image: Gilbert&George. Courtesy Astrup Fearnley Museet.



Gilbert & George. Photo by Christian Øen. Courtesy Astrup Fearnley Museet