

ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS ANNOUNCES ELECTION OF DAVID ADJAYE AND GILBERT & GEORGE AS NEW ROYAL ACADEMICIANS

The Royal Academy of Arts has elected the internationally renowned architect Sir David Adjaye and artist Gilbert & George as new Royal Academicians following a recent General Assembly.

Christopher Le Brun, President of the Royal Academy, said “David Adjaye joins us at a time when the Royal Academy architects currently comprise a more distinguished group than at any time in its long history. I’m delighted to welcome Gilbert & George to the Royal Academy; the election of two people as one artist member is the first of its kind in the history of the Academy.”

Sir David Adjaye OBE (born Tanzania, 1966)

Sir David Adjaye is recognised as a leading architect of his generation. Born in Tanzania to Ghanaian parents, his broadly ranging influences, ingenious use of materials and sculptural ability have established him as an architect with an artist’s sensibility and vision. He founded Adjaye Associates in 2000, and immediately won several prestigious commissions including the Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo (2005) and the Idea Stores in London (2005), which were credited with pioneering a new approach to the provision of information services. His largest project to date, the \$540 million Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, opened on the National Mall in Washington DC in Autumn of 2016 and was named Cultural Event of the Year by the New York Times.

Adjaye Associates now has offices in London, New York and Accra with projects in the US, UK, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. These include the Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO (2010), the Sugar Hill mixed-use social housing scheme in Harlem, New York (2015); the Aishti Foundation retail and art complex in Beirut (2015); and two neighbourhood libraries in Washington DC (2012). Prominent ongoing projects include a new home for the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, a major neighbourhood masterplan in San Francisco, and One Berkeley, a £600 million redevelopment project in London’s prestigious Piccadilly area.

Adjaye frequently collaborates with contemporary artists on art and installation projects. Examples include The Upper Room, with thirteen paintings by Chris Ofili (2002), Within Reach, and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art for the 21st Century Pavilion designed to show a work by Olafur Eliasson, Your Black Horizon, at the 2005 Venice Biennale. Adjaye worked with curator Okwui Enwezor on the design of the 56th Venice Art Biennale (2015). He was awarded an OBE for services to architecture in 2007, received the Design Miami/ Artist of the Year title in 2011, the Wall Street Journal Innovator Award in 2013 and the 2016 Panerai London Design Medal, awarded by the London Design Festival. In 2017, Adjaye received a knighthood for services to architecture in the Queen’s New Year’s Honours list.

Gilbert & George (Gilbert, born Italy, 1943; George, born Devon, 1942)

Gilbert & George began creating art together in 1967 when they met at St Martins School of Art, and from the beginning, in their films and 'LIVING SCULPTURE' they appeared as figures in their own art. The artists believe that everything is potential subject matter for their art, and they have always addressed social issues, taboos and artistic conventions. Implicit in their art is the idea that an artist's sacrifice and personal investment is a necessary condition of art. They have depicted themselves as naked figures in their own pictures, recasting the male nude as something vulnerable and fragile rather than as a potent figure of strength. The backdrop and inspiration for much of their art is the East End of London where Gilbert & George have lived and created art for nearly 50 years. From street signs to Ginkgo trees, from chewing gum stains on the pavements to vistas of urban grandeur and decay, their work is both an ongoing portrait of a city and a reflection on the human condition. Gilbert & George have confronted many of the fundamental issues of existence: sex, religion, corruption, violence, hope, fear, racial tension, patriotism, addiction and death.

Gilbert & George both live and work in London. Together they have participated in many important group and solo exhibitions including 51st International Venice Biennale (2005), Turner Prize (1984) and Carnegie International (1985). They have had extensive solo exhibitions, including Whitechapel Gallery (1971-1972), National Gallery, Beijing (1993), Shanghai Art Museum (1993), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1995-1996), Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1998), Serpentine Gallery, London (2002), Kunsthaus Bregenz (2002), Kestnegergesellschaft, Hannover (2004-2005), Tate Modern, London, Haus der Kunst, Munich (both 2007), Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, Philadelphia Museum of Art (both 2008), 'Jack Freak Pictures', CAC Malaga, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels (all 2010), Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Kunstmuseum Linz (both 2011), Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdansk (2011-2012), Museum Kuppersmuhle, Duisberg (2012), and Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter (2014).