



Tête-à-tête

Sue Arrowsmith & Ian Davenport | Rob & Nick Carter
Charlotte & Philip Colbert | Rossella Fumasoni & Piero Pizzi Cannella
Ilya and Emilia Kabakov | Carolina Mazzolari & Conrad Shawcross
Annie Morris & Idris Khan | Shirin Neshat & Shoja Azari

Exhibition curated by Catherine Loewe
Artist portraits by Maryam Eisler

Inauguration: Thursday 9 May 2024, 6.00 pm

Exhibition Dates: 10 May – 6 July 2024

Mucciaccia Gallery

Rome, Largo della Fontanella di Borghese 89

PRESS RELEASE

Mucciaccia Gallery is delighted to present the exhibition **Tête-à-tête** in its gallery in **Rome**, curated by Catherine Loewe which explores the fascinating world of artist couples where love, life and art fuse ignited by a shared passion for each other and for their work. The exhibition brings together eight internationally acclaimed contemporary artist couples, featuring an array of multi-disciplinary work, including photography, textiles, sculpture, painting and digital art. As the title which refers to the French expression “head to head” suggests, the exhibition offers a rare glimpse into the dynamics behind artist relationships, revealed through intimate conversations with them. With works displayed in dialogue with each other, the exhibition explores how the creative interplay between these couples has impacted their practices, whether working individually or in collaboration. In an ever-evolving cultural landscape and rapidly changing world, these modern-day duos navigate the complexities of relationships while simultaneously pushing the boundaries of artistic expression in the 21st century.

Catherine Loewe, curator of the exhibition, says: "Although relationships can be a fertile ground for creativity, they are not without challenges, requiring a high degree of tolerance and compromise, particularly when navigating the creative process, the demands of a hectic international exhibition schedule and the needs of a family. The times may have radically changed, but today's artists follow in the footsteps of pioneering couples such as Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, Pablo Picasso and Françoise Gilot, whose often tumultuous lives played a key role in the development of avant-garde art."

Sue Arrowsmith (Manchester, 1968) and **Ian Davenport** (Sidcup, 1966) have been together for 35 years having met at Goldsmith College in London in the 1980s. This was the epicenter for the nascent development of the YBA's – a close-knit group of artists who burst on the scene with Damien Hirst's infamous curatorial debut Freeze. For this exhibition they have especially created works in dialogue with each other. Sue's recent use of gold leaf and Ian's exploration of Italian Renaissance art have led to a fusion of approaches, inspired by early icons and the paintings of Fra Angelico. Both share a remarkable dedication to experimentation in their chosen medium of painting often exploring the interplay of colour, form and space.

Rob & Nick Carter (born in the United Kingdom in 1969 and 1968, respectively), met as teenagers in school, only to meet again 10 years later and begin working together in 1998. Their 25-year collaboration and marriage continues to push the boundaries of new technologies, drawing on the rich heritage of art history, using cutting edge techniques including HD video, 3D printing and the use of robots in the creation of their works. On display are four works after Botticelli's famous Venus, given celebrity treatment by Warhol, the goddess of love is transformed through vibrant colors using a six-axis robot arm accurate within a tenth of a millimeter, realizing a work untouched by human hand. Also on display is a portrait of Warhol himself, part of their *Dark Factory* series and their pioneering digital painting breathing life into Giorgione's *Dresden Venus* on a two and half hour loop that sees day turn to night.

The multi-media work produced by **Charlotte Colbert** (NYC, 1987) and **Philip Colbert** (Scotland, 1979) came together spectacularly in their live/workspace. Every daily object is revisited with their symbols, Charlotte's eye, and Philip's lobster, displaying that spirit of playfulness, discovery, and passion that only an avant-garde couple could share. Charlotte and Philip met 12 years ago—she was writing a screenplay about Nietzsche, and Philip suggested they visit the philosopher's home in Sils Maria. This is the first time the couple have exhibited together. In the exhibition, Charlotte's symbols of imagination and a sinuous new sculpture flank Philip's lobsters painted on canvas, establishing a dialogue between modern surrealists.

Rossella Fumasoni (Rome, 1964) and **Piero Pizzi Cannella** (Rocca di Papa, 1955) met in 1988 and married in Foria d'Ischia in 1997. They share a love of poetry, art and painting. As Rossella says, "We are bound by 35 uninterrupted years: 12,775 days and nights, endless passionate discussions and a son, Arturo, born in 1998." Facing each other in the exhibition are two large visionary canvases, one for each artist.

For some, a shared life means expressing one's creativity as one voice, and it is moving to hear **Emilia Kabakov** (Dnipropetrovsk - USSR, now Dnipro, Ukraine 1945), who last year lost her husband Ilya (Dnipropetrovsk - USSR, now Dnipro, Ukraine 1933 - New York 2023), after 35 years of marriage, talk about how they were "one and the same," critics, companions, lovers, friends and alter egos. On display are some of their most iconic themes including two ceramic sculptures, *The Eternal Emigrant* and *Golden Apples*, and *The Flying # 3*, a large tapestry, in which figures hover and fly in the air above the roofs of houses.

Carolina Mazzolari (Milan, 1981) and **Conrad Shawcross** (London, 1977) first met in Oxford in 2001 and then met again in Venice in 2011, before marrying in 2013. They live and work in London's East End, in a building that formerly housed an animal taxidermist and before that the horses for the number 38 bus. The building is both a home and an industrial-scale studio, where they create their deeply poetic, philosophical and abstract works. The exhibition features Carolina's sewn textiles that, juxtaposed with Conrad's geometric steel sculptures, suggest the duality of yin and yang, balancing two opposites that are the expression of an indivisible union.

Annie Morris's (London, 1978) use of raw, vibrant pigments has over the years encouraged **Idris Khan** (Birmingham, 1978) to experiment with a more colorful palette. They met in 2009 at Annie's exhibition in London and after a whirlwind romance married the following year in France, intertwining their practices and giving impetus to much of their current work. The enormous respect, devotion and support the artists have for each other serves as a catalyst for their work. In the exhibition, Annie's multicolored spheres and textile works are juxtaposed with Idris's densely layered abstract works.

Shirin Neshat (Qazvin, Iran, 1957), Shirin Neshat is an Iranian-born artist and filmmaker living in New York. Neshat works and continues to experiment with the mediums of photography, video and film, which she imbues with highly poetic and politically charged images and narratives that question issues of power, religion, race, gender and the relationship between the past and present, East and West, individual and collective through the lens of her personal experiences as an Iranian woman living in exile. Her close collaboration with partner Iranian filmmaker and artist **Shoja Azari** (Shiraz, Iran 1957) has resulted in an award-winning body of work, including video installations, feature films, and a multimedia theater performance. They first met in 1997, when Shirin asked Shoja for help in making the video *Turbulent*. On display is *Idyllic Life* a video by Shoja Azari from 2012 and a photograph with ink and acrylic paint by Shirin Neshat from the *Land of Dreams* series.

The exhibition is accompanied by a series of captivating portraits of each of the couples taken by celebrated photographer **Maryam Eisler**, who through her camera lens has captured the subtle relationship that exists between each pair of artists.

Accompanying the exhibition is a bilingual (Italian and English) catalogue published by Silvana Editoriale, with a critical text by curator Catherine Loewe, interviews with the artists with Catherine Loewe and Maryam Eisler.

Rome, April 2024

Photos and press materials:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sc/fo/z3iqmdkqif0vee61fnbi9/h?rlkey=flmn9iy5dzayoto0pzapvw2n4&dl=0>

Exhibition Press Office

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INFORMATION:

Exhibition: Tête-à-tête

Curator: Catherine Loewe

Venue: Mucciaccia Gallery, Rome, Largo della Fontanella Borghese 89

Opening: Thursday 9 May 2024, 6.00 pm, 18.00 hours

Open to the public: May 10 - July 6, 2024

Hours: Monday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.; Sunday closed | Saturday, June 29 closed

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