

Royal
Academy
of Arts

GSK
Contemporary

EARTH
Art of a changing world

Press Release

GSK CONTEMPORARY

EARTH: ART OF A CHANGING WORLD

3 December 2009 – 31 January 2010

ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS

6 BURLINGTON GARDENS

Supported by



The Royal Academy of Arts presents GSK Contemporary 2009, the second annual contemporary art season at 6 Burlington Gardens. Opening in December, **Earth: Art of a changing world** will present new and recent work from more than 30 leading international contemporary artists, including commissions and new works from the best emerging talent.

Recent debates have centred less on the possibility and more on the certainty and speed with which climate change will take place. As the debate has developed, so too has our approach to the future. Co-curated by Kathleen Soriano, Director of Exhibitions at the Royal Academy, David Buckland, Director of Cape Farewell, and, Edith Devaney, Royal Academy, this exhibition will reflect the impact of the climate change debate on the practice of a broad range of contemporary artists across a wide variety of media.

Many of the artists featured are actively engaged with the issue itself, working directly to transform the global scale of climate change into a human narrative. Others have shown it to have a place, or to resonate, within their work. *Earth* will interconnect 'issue' and 'art', and will present works that are beautiful, powerful and thought-provoking. The exhibition will build on the power of the individual works to create an overall aesthetic, visual and experiential impact that explores some of the cultural impacts of climate change.

The exhibition will introduce the key elements that make up the natural world, and the activities that affect the planet's fragile equilibrium. Works by artists including Ackroyd & Harvey, Spencer Finch, Antony Gormley, Mona Hatoum, Marcos Lutyens & Alessandro Marianantoni, Semiconductor and United Visual Artists engage with the earth, air, sky, nature and carbon elements to encourage a deeper consideration of our cultural relationship to earth's stability.

Artists such as Antti Laitinen, Edward Burtynsky, Gary Hume and David Nash will represent our contemporary world and will invoke a dialogue around the perceived security of our existence.

At the centre of the show, a group of exhibits will elucidate the role of the artist in the cycle of human and cultural evolution – as communicator, reflector and interpreter of key issues of the day. Within this section artists such as Darren Almond, Sophie Calle, Tacita Dean, Kris Martin, Lucy + Jorge Orta, Cornelia Parker, the poet Lemn Sissay and Shiro Takatani hold up a mirror to our changing world, producing work that will encourage us to examine the issues from a variety of angles, to reflect and question. Other works will confront the viewer with the consequences of human behaviour through natural disasters and physical collapse, counterpoising the beauty of the planet with the damage that is being inflicted upon it.

The exhibition concludes with works that present a world of vision and of hope, but through the glass of reality. These works will reflect notions of beauty and inspiration fundamentally re-defined by climate change. This subtle shift represents the first major change in our view of the world since the first 'whole earth images' emerged as photographs taken from Apollo 8 in 1968, an image that anchors our contemporary perception of the beauty and fragility of the earth that has germinated new notions of care and empathy for our habitat. Works by artists such as Tracey Emin, the writer, Ian McEwan, Mariele Neudecker, Keith Tyson and Emma Wieslander will offer insight, vision and hope, responding powerfully to this cultural shift, some with a celebration of beauty and what we stand to lose. These artists approach this shift from various perspectives: some engaging with the rigour of scientific endeavour, others through the use of imagined worlds, film and music, delving into the emotional understanding of knowledge.

"The Royal Academy of Arts is delighted to have the opportunity once again to experiment in mounting a major new exhibition in 6 Burlington Gardens, supported this year, as last, by GSK. This year we are looking at issues raised in international art practice by the catastrophic consequences of climate change. Over time, the sponsorship of GSK in establishing GSK Contemporary will help us to shape the future use of the building prior to its refurbishment."

Charles Saumarez Smith, Secretary & Chief Executive, Royal Academy of Arts

"This second year of GSK Contemporary is an important collaboration between GlaxoSmithKline and the Royal Academy that builds on our long-standing support for the arts in the UK. Creativity and innovation are critical to our business of improving health and well-being, so we want this year's topic 'Earth' to encourage debate, discussion and creative thinking and the role art can play on the relevance that climate change has on our daily lives."

Dr Justine Frain, Vice President, Global Community Partnerships, GlaxoSmithKline

Notes to Editors:

1. As part of its support of the Royal Academy of Arts, and its work with contemporary artists, GlaxoSmithKline are sponsoring a three-year programme of three individual exhibitions at the Royal Academy's galleries in 6 Burlington Gardens – GSK Contemporary.
2. GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) is one of the world's leading pharmaceutical and healthcare companies and is committed to improving the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer. In 2008, GlaxoSmithKline's community investment was £124 million and targeted health and education programmes in

almost 100 countries. GlaxoSmithKline is one of the largest charitable givers in the FTSE 100 and has a long history of supporting art initiatives that encourage creative thinking.

For more information please visit: www.gsk.com/community

3. The Royal Academy of Arts and The National Trust are, for the first time, working in partnership in relation to a commission within **GSK Contemporary: Earth**. This relationship will support The National Trust's environmental and contemporary art activities and ambitions, as well as uniting two major cultural organisations in their focus on such a significant issue.
4. The Royal Academy is collaborating for the first time with Burlington Arcade on an installation which will extend **GSK Contemporary: Earth** from the portico of 6 Burlington Gardens, along the length of Britain's oldest covered shopping street, out on to Piccadilly.

EVENTS

GSK Contemporary: Earth will present two evening events, to include panel discussions, artist talks, performances and music inspired by the themes of Water and Fire. Also planned is a family activity programme, involving lively activities and inviting families to explore the exhibition.

DATES AND OPENING HOURS

Press View: Tuesday 1 December 2009
Open to public: Thursday 3 December 2009 – Sunday 31 January 2010
Closed 24 and 25 December 2009
10am – 6pm daily (last admission 5.30pm)
Late night openings: Fridays until 10pm (last admission 9.30pm)

ADMISSION

£7 full price; £6 Registered Disabled and 60 + years; £5 NUS / ISIC cardholders; £4 12–18 years and Income Support; £3 8–11 years; 7 and under free. Family Ticket: £16

TICKETS

Tickets are available daily at the RA. To book tickets in advance please visit www.royalacademy.org.uk/earth. Groups of 10 or more are asked to book in advance; please tel: 020 7300 8027, fax: 020 7300 8084 or email: groupbookings@royalacademy.org.uk

IMAGES

Publicity images for **GSK Contemporary: Earth** can be obtained from Calum Sutton PR. Please contact info@suttonpr.com / +44 (0) 207 183 3577

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For advanced tickets please print www.royalacademy.org.uk/earth