

News Release

Wednesday 8 March 2017

ARTIST GILLIAN WEARING AGES 20 YEARS IN *ROCK 'N ROLL 70* - A LARGE WALLPAPER OF MULTIPLE SELF-PORTRAITS - AND UNVEILS NEW WORKS INSPIRED BY CLAUDE CAHUN

Announced on International Women's Day - Gillian Wearing and Claude Cahun: Behind the mask, another mask (9 Mar-29 May 2017)



(from left): **My exquisite corpse** by Gillian Wearing with Gary Hume (head), Michael Landy (torso) and Gillian Wearing (legs), 2016 © Gary Hume © Michael Landy © Gillian Wearing, courtesy Maureen Paley, London; **At Claude Cahun's grave** by Gillian Wearing 2015; Courtesy the artist © Gillian Wearing, courtesy Maureen Paley, London, Regen Projects, Los Angeles and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; **Self-portrait (with masked face and graveyard)** by Claude Cahun, c.1947; Jersey Heritage Collections © Jersey Heritage; **Cahun and Wearing** by Gillian Wearing, 2017 © Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Regen Projects, Los Angeles; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

New portraits by artist Gillian Wearing will be seen for the first time at the National Portrait Gallery, including works inspired by the early twentieth-century French photographer Claude Cahun, it was announced today, International Women's Day, Wednesday 8 March 2017.

The monumental *Rock n'roll 70 wallpaper* (2015-16), a computer-generated impression of the artist aging, will be displayed, for the first time in the UK, on an entire wall of the Gallery's exhibition ***Gillian Wearing and Claude Cahun: Behind the mask, another mask***, opening Thursday 9 March.

Specially created for the exhibition in tribute to the surrealist work of Claude Cahun, *My Exquisite Corpse* is Wearing's own version of a parlour game played by the Surrealists in which each participant draws on a sheet of paper, folds it to conceal the work and passes it to the next player for their contribution. For this composite portrait of herself, Wearing invited fellow artists Gary Hume and Michael Landy to collaborate, with Hume creating the head, Landy, the torso, and Wearing the legs.

A foreboding self-portrait of Claude Cahun, taken in the graveyard where she was to be buried a few years later and holding a mask over her face, inspired Wearing to 'collaborate' with her forebear in another new work, *At Cahun's Grave* (2015). To create her response, Wearing posed behind Cahun and her partner Marcel Moore's shared tombstone with her hair combed over her face, to create a darker version of Cahun's featureless mask. Gillian

Wearing cups her hands around her face, mirroring Cahun's original photograph in an attempt to peel back the layers of this most enigmatic artist more than sixty years after her death.

In another new work *Cahun and Wearing*, the artists stand side-by-side, like twins, dressed in the same dark cloaks. A single floating arm appears from the opening of each cloak signifying their shared fascination with disembodied limbs.



Rock 'n' Roll 70 (wallpaper) by Gillian Wearing 2015 © Gillian Wearing, courtesy Maureen Paley, London, Regen Projects, Los Angeles and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

In *Rock n'roll 70 wallpaper* (2015-16), working either with forensic artists, or undertaking the technical work herself, Wearing has produced impressions of how she might age by showing the effects of plastic surgery, changing hairstyles and dress. In one image in this evolving work influenced by Warhol's wallpaper works, she poses with her partner, Michael Landy, also 'age progressed' to seventy.

The display of *Rock n'roll 70 wallpaper* (2015-16) is shown with an unfinished triptych *Rock n'roll 70* (2015) featuring a rare photograph of Wearing, unmasked; a computer-generated artist's impression of how she might look aged seventy and an empty space for a photograph of Wearing, should she reach that age.



Rock 'n' Roll 70 by Gillian Wearing 2015 © Gillian Wearing, courtesy Maureen Paley, London, Regen Projects, Los Angeles and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

Gillian Wearing and Claude Cahun: Behind the mask, another mask (9 March -29 May 2017) draws together over 100 works by French artist Claude Cahun (1894–1954) and British contemporary artist Gillian Wearing (b.1963). While they were born 70 years apart, they share similar themes of gender, identity, masquerade and performance.

Cahun, along with her contemporaries André Breton and Man Ray, was affiliated with the French Surrealist movement although her work was rarely exhibited during her lifetime. Together with her partner, the artist and stage designer Marcel Moore, the two women left Paris and were then imprisoned in Nazi-occupied Jersey during the Second World War as a result of their roles in the French Resistance. In her photographs she is depicted wearing masks and costumes and engaging with Surrealist ideas. She also changes her appearance by shaving her hair and wearing wigs, often challenging traditional notions of gender representation.

Gillian Wearing studied at Goldsmiths University, winning the Turner Prize in 1997. She has exhibited extensively in the United Kingdom and internationally, including solo exhibitions at the Whitechapel Gallery and Serpentine Gallery, whilst overseas, recent retrospectives include IVAM Valencia and K20 Dusseldorf. Wearing's photographic self-portraits incorporate painstaking recreations of her as others in an intriguing and sometimes unsettling range of guises such as where she becomes her immediate family members using prosthetic masks.

Despite their different backgrounds, obvious and remarkable parallels can be drawn between the artists whose fascination with identity and gender is played out through performance and masquerade. Wearing has referenced Cahun overtly in the past: *Me as Cahun holding a mask of my face* is a reconstruction of Cahun's self-portrait *Don't kiss me I'm in training* of 1927, and forms the starting point of this exhibition, the title of which (*Behind the mask, another mask*) adapts a quotation from Claude Cahun's Surrealist writings.

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director, National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'This inspired, timely and poignant exhibition pairs the works of Gillian Wearing and Claude Cahun. These pioneering artists, although separated by several decades, address similarly compelling themes around gender, identity, masquerade, performance and the idea of the self, issues that are ever more relevant to the present day.'

Sarah Howgate, Curator, ***Gillian Wearing and Claude Cahun: Behind the mask, another mask***, says: 'It seems particularly fitting that at the National Portrait Gallery on International Women's Day we are bringing together for the first time Claude Cahun's intriguing and complex explorations of identity with the equally challenging and provocative self-images of Gillian Wearing.'

Gillian Wearing and Claude Cahun: Behind the mask, another mask is curated by Sarah Howgate, Senior Curator of Contemporary Portraits at the National Portrait Gallery, London. Her previous exhibitions at the Gallery include *Lucian Freud Portraits* and *David Hockney Portraits* and her displays at the Gallery include *Lucian Freud Unseen* (2016), *Friendship Portraits: Chantal Joffe and Ishbel Myerscough* (2015), *Catherine Goodman: Portraits from Life* (2014) and *Alex Katz: Portraits* (2010). Her publications include *The Twenty-First Century Portrait* (co-written with Sandy Nairne.)

GILLIAN WEARING AND CLAUDE CAHUN: BEHIND THE MASK, ANOTHER MASK

9 March -29 May 2017, at the National Portrait Gallery, London www.npg.org.uk

Exhibition organised in collaboration with Gillian Wearing

Spring Season 2017 sponsored by Herbert Smith Freehills LLP

Supported by Cockayne – Grants for the Arts and The London Community Foundation

Tickets with donation: Full price £12 / Concessions £10; Tickets without donation: Full price £10.50 / Concessions £8.50 (Free for Members and Patrons) npg.org.uk/wearingcahun or 020 7321 6600 #WearingCahun

Press View: Wednesday 8 March 2017 10.00-12.00 (with a tour at 10.30).

For further Press information, please contact: Neil Evans, Media Relations Manager, National Portrait Gallery: Tel. 020 7 312 2452 (not for publication) / Email nevans@npg.org.uk **For images**, please go to: www.npg.org.uk/press

National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place WC2H 0HE, opening hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday: 10.00 – 18.00 (Gallery closure commences at 17.50) **Late Opening:** Thursday, Friday: 10.00 – 21.00 (Gallery closure commences at 8.50pm) **Nearest Underground:** Leicester Square/Charing Cross **General information:** 0207 306 0055 **Recorded information:** 020 7312 2463 **Website** www.npg.org.uk