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Entertainment

# Seeing red: Gilbert & George still fired up after more than 40 years of making art

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### Gilbert & George: The Art Exhibition, at MONA

Gilbert & George will be presenting their work for the first time in Australia at the Museum of Old and New Art in Hobart, 28 November - 28 March.

- [Gilbert & George bring their shock tactics to MONA](#)
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"It gives me chills," says John Kaldor, the arts patron who first brought Gilbert & George to Australia in the early 1970s, his reaction clearly visceral when he sees a film of the pair singing *Underneath The Arches*.

The duo's *Singing Sculpture*, which they presented at the Art Gallery of NSW and the National Gallery of Victoria, caused a sensation in 1973.



Back up in Australia: Gilbert & George, with a work from their 2013 Scapegoating Pictures series, at Hobart's Museum of Old and New Art. Photo: Remi Chauvin / MONA

Now they're presenting a 40-year retrospective of their work at the Museum of Old and New Art in Hobart, followed by a talk in Melbourne on Monday.

Viewing the show with patrons and Mona director David Walsh ahead of the opening on Saturday, Gilbert & George were just as struck with the strength of their memories.

"It was extraordinary, when we were baby artists and hardly known," George says of their first visit to Australia. "It became part of our history and part of Australia's history as well."



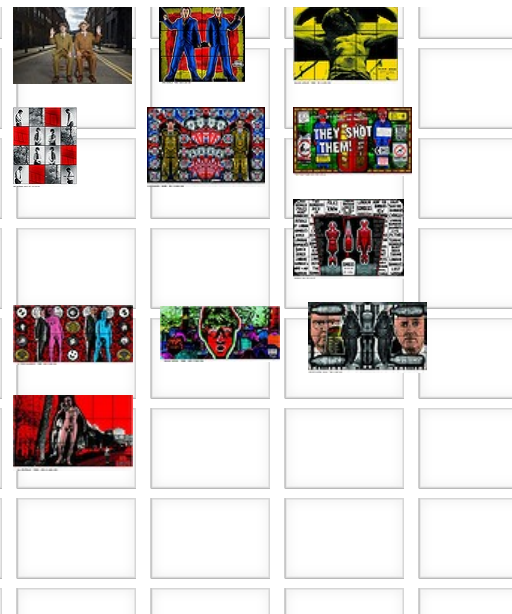
Gilbert & George: "We have a church at one end of our street and a mosque at the other end and we are the secular non-believers in the middle." Photo: Remi Chauvin / MONA

The exhibition of close to 100 pieces from throughout their career, which began in the 1960s when they studied at London's St Martin's School of Art, range from black and white photographs to their distinctive banners in the style of newspaper posters, more graphic colour-saturated works (many featuring them naked, and even their faeces) from the '80s and '90s and recent pieces that look at the subject of religion.

These are subjects the pair has addressed many times over the years, inspired by the centre of their world, their home and studio just off the cultural melting pot that is Brick Lane in London's Spitalfields.

**Gilbert & George: The Art Exhibition**

"Gentlemen of the gutter: Gilbert & George. Photo: Jay Brooks/Camera Press/AustralS end and we are the secular non-believers in the middle," says Gilbert.

Some of the first works you see in the show, from the 2013 series *Scapegoating Pictures*, are among the most serious and impactful – with images of women in burqas, bombs, religious iconography and the pair's trademark self portraits – and seem to have increased resonance given events of recent weeks in Europe and the Middle East.



"We always want to be aggressive in some way," says Gilbert. "We don't always want to be nice people. We want to [show] anger."

"And aggression, danger, all of the meanings of red," George adds. "We realised that if you put red on top of a black and white picture then you make a totally different feeling."

"This piece ... here, [it's] campaigning art," says George. "The pictures are not there because they have nice shapes or colours. It's to speak about our lives in this planet, our futures ... These pictures will be just as relevant in 20 or 30 years, I'm sure of that."

"I think it's based on what is out there, we're feeling the world," says Gilbert. "There's a revolution going on out there in the new world and nobody knows where we're going any more. Now Europe is frigid ... they don't know what to think or what to do."

"There are still threats to our modern, Western way of life," says George. "There are people who would like to turn the clock back."

**Gilbert & George The Art Exhibition is at Mona until March 28. The pair will speak at the National Gallery of Victoria on Monday, November 30 (the event is sold out).**

**The writer travelled to Hobart as a guest of Mona and Tourism Tasmania.**