

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS



Gert & Uwe Tobias, *Untitled*, 2017, coloured woodcut on canvas, 150 x 130 cm. (59 1/8 x 51 1/8 in.)

GERT & UWE TOBIAS

27 March – 12 May 2018

PRIVATE VIEW: MONDAY, 26 MARCH, 6-8PM

Ben Brown Fine Arts is thrilled to present its first solo exhibition of collaborative twin brothers Gert and Uwe Tobias, to be held at the Hong Kong gallery and coinciding with Art Basel Hong Kong 2018. The artists will present a new series of large-scale handmade woodcuts on canvas, mixed media works on paper, and unique ceramic vases.

The 44 year old Romanian-born brothers, based in Cologne, Germany, work as a collaborative producing fantastical, enigmatic, otherworldly imagery, employing a diverse range of traditional and contemporary artistic practices in their woodcuts, collages, ceramic sculptures and installations. The brothers draw profound inspiration from their native Transylvania, incorporating folkloric legend, vernacular motifs, costumery and handicraft into their work, while distinguishing it with references to contemporary culture and other art historic influences such as Russian Suprematism and Surrealism. Their ability to blur and subvert the lines between fine art and craft, decoration and abstraction, folklore and history, hand-made and processed, and the ancient and post-modern, results in a highly unique, inimitable and fascinating body of work.

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The Tobias brothers have distinguished themselves within the contemporary art scene by their dedication to and experimentation with the woodcut printing technique, which has a particularly long tradition in Germany going back to the 15th century, practiced by masters ranging from Albrecht Dürer and Hans Baldung to the German Expressionists to Georg Baselitz. This exhibition features a group of elaborately hand-crafted woodcuts on canvas, in which the artists modify traditional methods of woodcut printing by cutting flat, individual shapes out of smooth poplar wood, applying paint to the jigsaw-like pieces with a roller, and then using their hands and feet to press the blocks of colour to their unprimed canvases on the floor of their vast studio. Rendered in soft jewel tones, these works present ethereal, sometimes haunting, feminine figures surrounded by flora and fauna against hazy grisaille and pastel-hued backgrounds. In many of the works, a distinction between foreground and background is created by the grid of ornamental, repetitive patterning on which the figures lie. While the brothers have not travelled to Asia, these works are meant to convey an outsider's fantasy and envisaged imagery of an unknown, exotic place.

The exhibition also includes a group of unique ceramic vases, on which the artists have hand-painted surreal hybrid creatures and eerie flora, as well as a group of intricately detailed, uncanny portraits in mixed media on paper. The Tobias brothers' myriad references to art and craft histories and practices, idiosyncratic adaptation of woodcut printing techniques, and their irreverence, humour and subversion, make them two of the most compelling figures in the contemporary art world.

About the artists

Gert and Uwe Tobias were born in 1973 in Braşov, Romania, a city within the Transylvania region made famous in the west by Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. As Transylvanian Saxons, and therefore of German ethnicity, the Tobiases were able to emigrate to Germany in 1985, and later studied at Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Braunschweig. The Tobias brothers have had solo exhibitions at numerous international institutions including Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany; Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany; Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium; Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK; Kunstmuseum Ravensburg, Germany; Kunstverein Hamburg, Germany; Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA. The artists currently live and work in Cologne, Germany.

FOR FURTHER PRESS INFORMATION AND ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:

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#GertandUweTobias

