

Long & Ryle

LONG & RYLE PRESENTS A RETROSPECTIVE OF THE WORK OF AMERICAN ARMENIAN ARTIST MARO GORKY

19 April - 12 May 2023

Private View: 19 April



Dievole, Late Spring Oil on Canvas (2007)

Long & Ryle is delighted to present *A Life Painting*, a first time retrospective of work from the acclaimed American Armenian artist Maro Gorky (b. New York, 1943) from 19 April - 12 May 2023 at 4 John Islip St, London SW1. The exhibition marks a celebration of Gorky's life and work and is held to coincide with her 80th birthday. The exhibition will feature a selection of oils and watercolours and works on paper, painted throughout her lifetime.

A Life Painting will feature paintings that reflect her signature bold use of colour depicting the vibrancy of the Tuscan countryside where she has lived with her husband, the sculptor and writer Matthew Spender, for the past fifty years. From the early-romanticised landscapes of

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undulating Tuscan hills, the paintings move towards an abstracted discourse on colour and pattern, whilst retaining the familiarity and warmth of the rural Italian environment.

In Gorky's landscapes there is a suggestion of a new feeling toward the sacred, expressed in simplified shapes, but always with a particular attention to the formal structure of the Tuscan landscape in which she lives. Says author and writer Anna Vittoria Laghi, *"Natural shapes are transformed into geometric archetypes, concentric circles repeat the ovoid forms; then she inserts a pause or a counterpoint, contrasting rhythm and silence to suggest the difference between a thought and emotion. They are an invitation to contemplate ancestry and nature, the remote and the eternally present"*.

Maro Gorky is the daughter of the celebrated Armenian artist Arshile Gorky, one of the originators of Abstract Expressionism. Growing up surrounded by the heroes of Modernism, her first art tutors – before she had properly learnt to walk – were Andre Breton and Roberto Matta. Her father's suicide when she was five years old, and the subsequent recognition of his epic legacy for American Art, set Maro Gorky on an artistic voyage that seemed both inborn and eternally restless.

Gorky studied under Frank Auerbach at the Slade School of Art before moving to Tuscany with Spender in 1968. Over the last 50 years, Gorky and Spender have rebuilt and resided in what was once an old ruin of a farmhouse. The house and the surrounding garden have become as much a creative endeavour as Gorky's painting. Inside the house, Gorky has frescoed the walls, wardrobe panels and even bathroom tiles with animals, plants and patterns as a lasting imprint of her brush. Outside upon approach to the farmhouse, peacocks wander through a profusion of plants, morning glory clammers over the terraces, and the life-size marble and terracotta sculptures by Spender populate the olive groves.

Describing the setting of the Tuscan landscape as the inspiration for Gorky's painting would not accurately convey the deep-seated impact that the landscape has had on her artwork. Gorky, Spender, the farmhouse and the natural surroundings, through maintaining a constant retrospective dialogue with one another over the years, have grown to become inextricably linked; a feeling that is evocatively manifested in the paintings in this exhibition.



Says Maro Gorky, "What an honour to be having a retrospective of my work in London to coincide with celebrating my 80th birthday. From as early as I can remember, being a painter was my calling, one that was put upon me by my father and his artist friends. And one that felt, for me, was the right path. With painting there is intention, there is composition and there is meaning. Not always does it resonate with the spectator. Despite this, the artist must remain true to themselves, even if this is a lonely path."

Sarah Long, Director Long & Ryle says: "It is so exciting to be presenting this glittering, cosmopolitan, retrospective of Maro Gorky's beautiful paintings. When I first met Maro I was in my early 20s and I held her first exhibition in London in 1983. At this time, the gallery was full of portraits of her circle of extraordinary friends; writers, artists, philanthropists and philosophers. As she grew older, portraits of her daughters and their friends - and now grandchildren - vied with her spiritual response to the sacred Tuscan landscapes that she has lived in for the past 60 years. To visit Maro and Matthew at their home in Tuscany, is to be transported into the magical world of their lifetime of creativity together."



Artist Maro Gorky at home in Tuscany, Italy.

Ends

Notes to Editors

About Maro Gorky

Maro Gorky was born in New York in 1943, elder daughter of the distinguished American painter of Armenian origin, Arshile Gorky. Her first lessons in painting took place with her father as a child. After her father's death, Maro Gorky's family moved to Europe and she went to schools in France, America, Spain, Italy and England. Gorky took her Baccalauréat at the French Lycée in London in 1960 and then studied at the Slade School of Art in London, where she graduated with a B.A. in Fine Art in 1965. In 1967 she married the artist Matthew Spender and the following year they moved to Italy. They have lived in the Siennese countryside ever since. They have two daughters, born in the early seventies, and four grandchildren. Gorky began to exhibit her work in the early eighties and has held exhibitions in London, Milan, Venice, Florence, Volterra, Pietrasanta, Carrara and Los Angeles. Solo exhibitions include: Long & Ryle (2015); Spineto, Castello a Monte (2013); Long & Ryle (2012); Long & Ryle (2009); Museo Civico, Fiesole (2008); Long & Ryle (2006); Salander-O'Reilly Galleries New York (2006); Massa, Castello Malaspina (2005); Silvia Bezdikian Fine Arts, Los Angeles (2004); Long & Ryle (2003); Long & Ryle (2002); Logge del Palazzo Pretori, Volterra, (2001); Centro Espositivo delle Erbe, Carrara (2001); Accademia delle Arti del Disegno, Florence (2000); Chiesa di Sant'Agostino, Pietrasanta (2000); Long & Ryle (2000);

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Percorsi d'arte 90, Venice (2000); Long & Ryle (1997); Long & Ryle (1994); Long & Ryle (1992); Long & Ryle (1990); Sarah Long, London (1989); The Albemarle Gallery, London (1988); Die Galerie am Steinweg, Passau (1986) and The Wraxall Gallery, London (1982).

About Long & Ryle

Long & Ryle was founded in 1988. Over the last thirty-five years, the gallery has built a reputation for introducing distinctive, poetic and resonant contemporary art from established British and International artists, as well as young and emerging talent. Long & Ryle Gallery is situated just behind the Tate Britain, in Westminster, London.

For further press information please contact Sitwell Dearden PR:

Nicole Dearden | nicole@sitwelldearthen.com | +44 7734 709833

Henrietta Sitwell | henrietta@sitwelldearthen.com | +44 7811 344540