

gavin turk is standing up for endangered animals in his new exhibition

Despite never actually getting a degree from the RCA (his final piece was a blue heritage plaque commemorating his time there as a student), Gavin Turk is one of the most prolific artists of the 21st century. With his latest work featuring in *Here Today*, an exhibition that celebrates the 50th anniversary of The IUCN's Red List of Endangered Species, Gavin draws our attention to the threatened extinction of animals.

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A true YBA and an early pioneer of painted bronze, waxwork sculpture, and the use of rubbish in art, Gavin's work centres around themes of authorship, authenticity and identity, while drawing on the great legacy of Marcel Duchamp's 'ready-mades' for inspiration. Putting his concerns with the individual artist to one side, and focusing his attention on the environment, Gavin is one of the many artists taking part in *Here Today*, an exhibition that celebrates the 50th anniversary of the IUCN's Red List of Endangered Species. With his iridescent Andy Warhol style print of a panda, brilliantly titled *Pandy Warhol*, Gavin hopes to raise awareness of the transience of life. We caught up with the artist to talk about fighting for a cause and saving the world, one species at a time.

What is the significance of the theme 'Here Today'?

The name *Here Today* is a play on of the expression 'here today, gone tomorrow', which is commonly used when discussing things that are transient - which is relevant to our society today and to the theme of this exhibition: the 50th anniversary of The IUCN's Red List of Endangered Species.

How long have you been involved with IUCN?

I have only recently become involved with them, when I was asked to participate in the *Here Today* exhibition. However, I have always been passionate about environmental issues. Raising awareness for threatened and endangered species is definitely something important to me, so I was very happy to be involved in this project and hope to continue being involved with the IUCN.

How important is saving the world's endangered species to you personally?

Every day animals, species and elements of the environment are disappearing and if we don't take action, many of the creatures and environments that we take for granted will become extinct. I think it's important to know the facts.

Why did you choose to represent a panda?

The panda is a symbol of endangered animals, the IUCN estimates that there are less than 1,600 mature giant pandas left in the wild. Pandas are deeply affected by their loss of habitat and are also threatened by poachers.

What was the reason behind the Andy Warhol aesthetic?

When I was introduced to the project, there was already an intention to show Andy Warhol's *Endangered Species* portfolio. But Warhol's most famous animal depiction for me is probably the cow, which features as a wallpaper. So I took this wallpaper as a starting point and developed the panda wallpaper idea.

Are there any other causes that you feel strongly about?

In 2006, my wife and I established the charity The House of Fairy Tales, which is a children's arts charity aimed at delivering creative learning experiences for children. We have always felt that there's disengagement between the creative needs and interests of children and those of adults, and we wanted to address this.

What's next?

I currently have a show on at The New Art centre, Roche Court in Salisbury called *We Are One* that brings together many of my neon works from the last 20 years. And I'm looking forward to next year with shows in New York and Vienna.

Here Today is showing at the Old Sorting Office from 25th November - 17th December 2014

heretoday.org

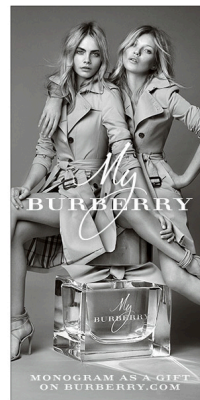
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