



Kenji Yoshida, *La Vie* 1993. Oil and metals on canvas. 195 x 780 cm. © Estate of Kenji Yoshida.

Vital Force

5th – 28th September, 2024

October Gallery presents *Vital Force*, an exhibition that includes striking works by **El Anatsui**, **Kenji Yoshida**, **LR Vandy**, **Romuald Hazoumè**, **Golnaz Fathi**, **Jukhee Kwon**, **William S. Burroughs**, **Brion Gysin** and **Govinda Sah 'Azad,'** amongst others. *Vital Force* gives space for the innate energies of each unique artwork to manifest before bringing them together in a powerful drama of luminous interactive forms. While each work contributes its own distinctive notes to the ensemble, the orchestral effect of the totality builds to a higher climax resulting in a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, that Elisabeth Lalouschek, Artistic Director of October Gallery, describes thus: 'When combining dramatically dissimilar art from diverse origins, unpredictably spectacular effects can occur, and one must be alert to catch those special moments of resonance that draw the works together.'

Highlights include **Kenji Yoshida's** magnificent large-scale work, *La Vie (Life)*, 1993, which employs an elliptical language of coloured forms rendered in gold and silver leaf. This extraordinary piece marries modernist abstraction with the delicate gilding techniques of Japanese tradition. Having narrowly survived the Second World War, Yoshida worked from his studio in Montparnasse, Paris, to create his instantly recognisable canvases, founded upon themes of 'Life and Peace.' One of the most distinguished artists of his generation, in 1993, Yoshida became the first living artist ever given a solo exhibition at the Japanese Galleries of the British Museum, London.

This large-scale panelled piece will be juxtaposed with a shimmering wall-hanging by **El Anatsui**. Created from recycled bottle-tops, intricately stitched together, the work will be hung in such a way as to allow the viewer to explore the range and composition of colours on both sides of the work. El Anatsui is best known for his mesmerising metallic installations, composed of thousands of individual pieces fastened together with copper wire. Anatsui was elected for the Hyundai Commission at Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, 2023 – 2024, where he presented the highly acclaimed, monumental installation, *Behind the Red Moon*.

Romuald Hazoumè will be represented by one of his signature masks. These provocative works, assembled from found and repurposed objects, operate as *impromptu* portraits of individuals, highlighting the artist's astute social commentary and witty sense of humour. *Rossy* reveals the intense poise and dramatic flair of an 80s actress about to take centre stage crowned in a brilliantly plumed headdress. Adopting the ubiquitous plastic petrol cannister as his iconic signature, Hazoumè's work is deeply rooted in the political and cultural context of Benin and its interactions with the wider globalised world beyond. His powerful multimedia

installation *Àşę*, 2024, created from plastic jerry-cans, is currently exhibited in the Republic of Benin Pavilion, *Everything Precious is Fragile*, at the 60th Venice Biennale.

Taken from her *Hulls* series, **LR Vandy's** *Resistance* is an impressive large-scale wooden work that incorporates manilla rope tied into knots set delicately into its frame. These knots evoke the clenched fist, a symbolic nod to the Black power salute, the feminist movement of the 80s and the braided African hairstyle of Bantu Knots. Vandy's use of hulls and knotted rope allude, generally, to the complex histories of transatlantic trade, and, more specifically, to the transport of migrants as commodities. By masterfully combining two unconnected objects as one, Vandy's work examines the transformation of identity, drawing upon the tradition of talismans, charms and amulets. Her most recent work will be displayed, alongside Kenji Yoshida's, at Honey & Smoke Grill House from 24th September – 2nd November, 2024.

Jukhee Kwon creates her intricate sculptures out of unused and abandoned books. By skilful slicing and precision cutting, she transforms these discarded tomes into sculptures bursting from the books' spines, streaming out in cascading waterfalls, or creeping, like paper tendrils, to explore ambient surface areas. The artist plays constantly with ideas of complementarity: destruction & re-creation, birth & death and other natural cycles or transformation.

Govinda Sah's latest canvas comprises subtly interwoven layers of acrylic marks and traces. Effortlessly balancing traditional eastern metaphysical insights about the nature of reality with visual realisations that are in accord with the contemporary formulations of western science, Sah is fascinated by the universes within and beyond our earth-bound vision. Similarly, Iranian artist **Golnaz Fathi's** bold gestural work, *When the rain comes, we can be thankful*, 2021, presents interwoven layers of enigmatic meanings. While exact communication depends upon the legibility of any text, the intense, increasingly overwritten lines deliberately eradicate all possibility of direct interpretation, leaving only intuition and association as meaningful guides towards an understanding.

Also on display will be *Nierica - Caressed By Fire*, a vibrant work by **Elisabeth Lalouschek** painted in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, the evocative location of the dramatic 1960s film, *Night of the Iguana*. Lost to sight for thirty years, the painting will be shown for the first time since 1990. Finally, ink and spray paint works by artist and author, **William S. Burroughs**, are exhibited in conversation with longtime collaborator and fellow artist **Brion Gysin's** work *De la Cité des Arts...*, an abstract ink on paper, depicting the artist's unique perspective from the window from which his studio overlooked the Ile Saint Louis. Gysin, present as a cut-out self-portrait, seems to reflect on his complex relationship with La cité internationale des arts de Paris, a refuge and focal point for Yoshida, Lalouschek and so many other artists over the years.

For information contact Alana Pryce Tojcic and for [press images click the Dropbox link HERE](#).

- Notes for Editors -

Exhibition:	<i>Vital Force</i>
Exhibition Dates:	5 th – 28 th September, 2024
Private View:	Thursday, 12 th September, 2024. 6 – 8.30pm
Venue:	October Gallery 24 Old Gloucester Street London WC1N 3AL
Telephone:	020 7242 7367
Opening hours:	Tuesday – Saturday 12.30 - 5.30pm
Admission:	Free
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