

GUGGENHEIM

NEWS RELEASE

Guggenheim Museum Presents *Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks*

First North American Retrospective of Gillian Wearing Features Photography, Video, Sculpture, and Paintings That Explore Performative Nature of Identity

Exhibition: *Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks*
Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Location: Tower Levels 2, 4, 5, 7 and New Media Theater
Dates: November 5, 2021–April 4, 2022

(NEW YORK, NY—November 4, 2021)—From November 5, 2021 through April 4, 2022, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presents *Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks*, the first retrospective of Wearing’s work in North America. Featuring more than a hundred pieces, the exhibition traces the development of the British conceptual artist’s practice from her earliest photographs and videos to her latest paintings and sculptures, all of which explore the performative nature of identity.

Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks is organized by [Jennifer Blessing](#), Senior Curator, Photography, and [Nat Trotman](#), Curator, Performance and Media, with [X Zhu-Nowell](#), Assistant Curator, and Ksenia Soboleva, former Marica and Jan Vilcek Curatorial Fellow.

[Gillian Wearing](#)’s profoundly empathetic and psychologically intense photographs, videos, sculptures, and paintings probe the tensions between self and society in an increasingly media-saturated world. Over her three-decade career, Wearing has focused equally on her own self-portraiture and on the depictions of others, testing the boundaries between the private and public, questioning fixed notions of identity, and frequently anticipating the cultural transformations wrought by social media. Throughout her works, masks serve as both literal props and metaphors for the performances each of us stage every day as individuals and as citizens.

For her landmark piece *Signs that say what you want them to say and not Signs that say what someone else wants you to say* (1992–93), Wearing photographed strangers holding placards with messages they

wrote themselves. In so doing, she changed the terms of documentary street photography and performance art by giving voice to the subjects of her images. This series established Wearing's long-standing strategy of engaging the public through classified ads, casting calls, or direct solicitation on the street in order to create platforms where people's often very personal stories could be shared with a wider audience.

Wearing has also repeatedly turned the camera on herself to examine the ways one's sense of self is established within familial, social, and historical contexts, especially in the aftermath of traumatic experience. Through her extensive interrogation of the self-portrait, she has pointedly expanded on Andy Warhol's notion that "everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes," predicting the rise of selfie culture. In addition to performing versions of herself, she has engaged with images of people who are closely connected to her identity as a person and as an artist. In her photographic series *Spiritual Family* (2008–present), for instance, she employs silicone prosthetics, wigs, and lighting to disguise herself as pivotal figures from art history who have been foundational influences on her practice. *Wearing Masks* will feature the first comprehensive presentation of this series, including numerous examples that have never been shown in a museum setting.

Wearing has long been fascinated by the ways film and television can conjure worlds that, while completely fabricated, still carry real emotional weight. Since 1996 she has cast professional actors in her videos in addition to working with nonactors. Her interest in the methods and effects of dramatic acting extend naturally from her examinations into the everyday performance of public life. On stage, emotional authenticity can be scripted and rehearsed, and actors often redirect personal experiences to express a character's truth. At the same time, victims of trauma sometimes recount their stories as though reading a script. This paradoxical relationship between acted and actual reality underlies many of Wearing's works, including her video *We Are Here* (2014). Wearing set this film in the West Midlands of England, where she grew up, working in locations that were of personal significance to her and with local residents, who deliver haunting monologues recounting their regrets, losses, and guilt. *We Are Here* screens continuously every Saturday (except November 6) from 12 to 5pm in the museum's New Media Theater.

In recent years Wearing has incorporated digital technologies into her photography and video while also moving into the mediums of painting, collage, and sculpture. *Wearing, Gillian* (2018), a short video produced in collaboration with the global advertising agency Wieden + Kennedy, revolves around an apparently candid statement of artistic purpose, delivered by actors whose faces have been digitally morphed with Wearing's. *Lockdown* (2020), a series of paintings made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and *My Charms* (2021), a sculptural self-portrait in the form of a gigantic charm bracelet, expand on Wearing's enduring investigation into the complex tensions between authentic self-revelation and deception. These new pieces will make their museum debut at the Guggenheim.

Installed throughout all four of the museum's Tower galleries and including screenings in the New Media Theater, *Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks* is accompanied by a richly illustrated, 192-page monograph that will survey the artist's three-decade career with a particular focus on her work of the last ten years. The exhibition will also coincide with a new sculptural tribute to photographer Diane Arbus

by Wearing on view October 20, 2021 through August 14, 2022 at Doris C. Freedman Plaza, Central Park, organized by Public Art Fund.

Program

Saturday, November 6, 4pm

Film Screening: *Self Made* (2010) by Gillian Wearing

Like many of her other works, *Self Made*, Wearing's first feature-length film, began with an open call for participants, which asked, "Would you like to be in a film? You can play yourself or a fictional character. Call Gillian." From auditions, Wearing chose seven amateurs who trained in the Method acting technique, resurfacing painful memories in preparation for individual "end scenes" produced by a full film crew. *Self Made* deftly weaves observational documentary footage of group exercises with one-on-one interviews shot before, during, and after the process; behind-the-scenes footage of the short films being made; and of course, the fictionalized scenarios themselves. As it ultimately loops back on its own opening sequence, though, the lines between actor and character, fiction and reality, become unclear.

[This screening](#) will take place in the Peter B. Lewis Theater on the lower level of the museum and is offered free with admission. An introduction will be provided by Nat Trotman, Curator of Media and Performance.

This program is part of [Saturday on the House](#).

Self Made, 2010

Color film, with sound, 84 min.

A Fly Film Production, in association with Third Films, supported by the UK Film Council and Northern Film & Media, in association with Arts Council England, Channel 4 Britdoc Foundation, and Abandon Normal Devices. Distributed by Cornerhouse Artist Film and Produced by Lisa Marie Russo.

Funders

Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks is made possible by the Edlis-Neeson Foundation, Alessandra and Alan Mnuchin, Ted Pappendick and Erica Gervais, Carla Emil and Rich Silverstein, Naomi Milgrom, and Maureen Paley. Additional support is provided by Zabłudowicz Collection in collaboration with Tamares Real Estate Holdings Inc., Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, Angelo K H Chan and Frederick Wertheim, Joseph M. Cohen Family Collection, Ann Cook and Charles Moss, Nion McEvoy and Leslie Berriman, Lauren and Scott Pinkus, Regen Projects, John L. Thomson, Cristina von Bargen and Jonathan McHardy, Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker, Ann and Mel Schaffer, and Elaine Goldman and John Benis.

Funding is also generously provided by LLWW Foundation and the Juliet Lea Hillman Simonds Foundation.

Support is also provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Additional funding is provided by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's Photography Council.

About the Artist

Gillian Wearing (b. 1963, Birmingham, U.K.) graduated from Goldsmiths College in 1990 and was awarded the Turner Prize in 1997. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized by Le Consortium, Dijon, France (1996); Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva (1998); Serpentine Gallery, London (2000); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2001); Sala de Exposiciones de la Fundación "la Caixa," Madrid (2001); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2002); Galleria Civica de Arte Contemporanea, Trento, Italy (2007); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2012); and IVAM, Valencia (2015); among many others. Recent exhibitions include *Gillian Wearing and Claude Cahun* at the National Portrait Gallery, London (2017); *Gillian Wearing: Family Stories* at SMK, Copenhagen (2017); and *Life: Gillian Wearing* at the Cincinnati Art Museum (2018). In 2018 the Mayor of London commissioned Wearing to create a public monument to Dame Millicent Fawcett, the first sculpture depicting a woman and the first created by a woman in London's Parliament Square. Wearing lives and works in London.

About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was established in 1937 and is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of modern and contemporary art through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The international constellation of museums includes the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao; and the future Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. An architectural icon and "temple of spirit" where radical art and architecture meet, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum is now among a group of eight Frank Lloyd Wright structures in the United States recently designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. To learn more about the museum and the Guggenheim's activities around the world, visit guggenheim.org.

Visitor Information

Admission: Adults \$25, students/seniors (65+) \$18, members and children under 12 free. Open Thursdays through Mondays from 11 am to 6 pm. Pay What You Wish hours are Saturdays from 4 to 6 pm, with free admission on Saturday on the House, offered once each month. Timed tickets are required and available at guggenheim.org/tickets. Explore the Guggenheim with our free Digital Guide, a part of the Bloomberg Connects app. Find it in the [Apple App Store](#) or in the [Google Play Store](#).

In compliance with the New York City mandate, all visitors over the age of 12 must show proof of a COVID-19 vaccination to enter the museum, and masks are required. Learn more about our [COVID-19 safety protocols](#).

For publicity images, visit guggenheim.org/pressimages

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November 4, 2021

#1618

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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Exhibition Checklist

Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 2

Gillian Wearing

Signs that say what you want them to say and not Signs that say what someone else wants you to say

1992-93

Chromogenic prints

17 1/2 x 11 3/4 in. (44.5 x 29.8 cm) each

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Dancing in Peckham

1994

Color video, with sound, 25 min.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Gift, Tracy and Gary Mezzatesta, 2017.50



Gillian Wearing

60 Minutes Silence

1996

Color video projection, with sound, 60 min.

Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London



Gillian Wearing

Bully

2010

Color video projection, with sound, 7 min., 55 sec.

Courtesy Fly Film; Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles.



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 2

Gillian Wearing

Gervais

2010

Painted bronze with aluminum plaque

15 1/2 x 4 7/8 x 6 3/4 in. (39 x 12.5 x 17 cm) overall

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Terri

2011

Painted bronze on marble base, with aluminum plaque

19 3/4 x 4 1/4 x 3 1/2 in. (50 x 10.8 x 8.7 cm) overall

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Crowd

2012

Color video for framed flatscreen monitor, silent, 15 min., continuous loop

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Craig

2012

Painted bronze on marble base, with aluminum plaque

26 1/4 x 5 1/2 x 4 3/4 in. (66.7 x 14 x 12 cm) overall

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Your Views

2013–

Color video, with sound, 162 min., 40 sec.

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 2

Gillian Wearing

Fear and Loathing

2014

Two-channel color video, with sound, 45 min., 45 sec.

Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere

2018

Polyurethane resin and acrylic paint on granite base with styrene and waterslide decals

18 1/2 x 5 7/8 x 5 1/2 inches (47 x 15 x 14 cm) overall

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Tower 4

Gillian Wearing

Sacha and Mum

1996

Black-and-white video projection, with sound, 4 min., 30 sec.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Purchased with funds contributed by the International Director's Council and Executive Committee Members: Eli Broad, Elaine Turner Cooper, Ronnie Heyman, J. Tomilson Hill, Dakis Joannou, Barbara Lane, Robert Mnuchin, Peter Norton, Thomas Walther, and Ginny Williams, 97.4571



Gillian Wearing

2 into 1

1997

Color video, with sound, 4 min., 30 sec.

Collection of Naomi Milgrom, Australia



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 4

Gillian Wearing

Theresa and Ali

1998

Two chromogenic prints

20 1/16 x 20 1/16 inches (51 x 51 cm) (each)

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Theresa and Ben

1998

Two chromogenic prints

20 1/16 x 20 1/16 inches (51 x 51 cm) each

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Theresa and Chris

1998

Two chromogenic prints

20 1/16 x 20 1/16 inches (51 x 51 cm)

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Theresa and George

1998

Two chromogenic prints

20 1/16 x 20 1/16 inches (51 x 51 cm) each

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Theresa and Gerry

1998

Two chromogenic prints

20 1/16 x 20 1/16 inches (51 x 51 cm) each

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 4

Gillian Wearing

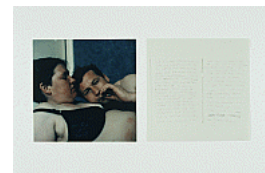
Theresa and Mick

1998

Two chromogenic prints

20 1/16 x 20 1/16 inches (51 x 51 cm) each

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Theresa and Seamus

1998

Two chromogenic prints

20 1/16 x 20 1/16 inches (51 x 51 cm) each

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Self-Portrait as My Brother Richard Wearing

2003

Framed chromogenic print

75 3/16 x 51 3/8 x 1 1/4 in. (191 x 130.5 x 3.2 cm)

Heather Podesta Collection



Gillian Wearing

Self-Portrait at 17 Years Old

2003

Framed chromogenic print

45 1/2 x 36 1/4 x 1 1/4 in. (115.5 x 92 x 3.2 cm)

Heather Podesta Collection



Gillian Wearing

Self-Portrait as My Father Brian Wearing

2003

Framed gelatin silver bromide print

64 9/16 x 51 3/8 x 1 1/4 in. (164 x 130.5 x 3.2 cm)

Heather Podesta Collection



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 4

Gillian Wearing

Self-Portrait as My Sister Jane Wearing

2003

Framed chromogenic print

55 1/2 x 45 11/16 x 1 1/4 in. (141 x 116 x 3.2 cm)

Heather Podesta Collection



Gillian Wearing

Self-Portrait as My Uncle Bryan Gregory

2003

Framed chromogenic print

48 13/16 x 32 1/2 x 1 1/4 in. (124 x 82.5 x 3.2 cm)

Heather Podesta Collection



Gillian Wearing

Self-Portrait as My Mother Jean Gregory

2003

Framed gelatin silver bromide print

59 1/16 x 51 5/8 x 1 1/4 in. (150 x 131 x 3.2 cm)

Heather Podesta Collection



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 4

Gillian Wearing

Self-Portrait at Three Years Old

2004

Framed chromogenic print

71 5/8 x 48 1/16 inches (182 x 122 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Purchased with funds contributed by the International Director's Council and Executive Committee Members: Ruth Baum, Edythe Broad, Elaine Turner Cooper, Dimitris Daskalopoulos, Harry David, Gail May Engelberg, Shirley Fiterman, Nicki Harris, Dakis Joannou, Rachel Lehmann, Linda Macklowe, Peter Norton, Tonino Perna, Elizabeth Richebourg Rea, Mortimer D. A. Sackler, Simonetta Seragnoli, David Teiger, Ginny Williams, and Elliot K. Wolk, and Sustaining Members: Tiqui Atencio, Linda Fischbach, Beatrice Habermann, Miryam Knutson, and Cargill and Donna MacMillan; with additional funds contributed by the Photography Committee, 2004.125



Gillian Wearing

Self-Portrait as My Grandmother Nancy Gregory

2006

Framed gelatin silver bromide print

60 1/16 x 48 7/16 x 1 1/4 in. (152.5 x 123 x 3.2 cm)

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Purchased with funds provided by the Photographs Council



Gillian Wearing

Self-Portrait as My Grandfather George Gregory

2006

Framed gelatin silver bromide print

60 1/16 x 48 7/16 x 1 1/4 in. (152.5 x 123 x 3.2 cm)

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Purchased with funds provided by the Photographs Council



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 4

Gillian Wearing

Family History

2006

Two-channel color video installation, with sound; one channel projected, 35 min., 32 sec., one channel on monitor, 2 min., 52 sec.

Produced by Film and Video Umbrella, London

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles.



Thannhauser 4

Gillian Wearing

Self-Portrait

2000

Framed chromogenic print

67 3/4 x 67 3/4 x 1 in. (172 x 172 x 2.5 cm)

Collection of Sherry and Joel Mallin, New York



Gillian Wearing

Nancy Gregory

2002

Color video, with sound, 2 min., continuous loop

Collection of Adam Sender, Florida



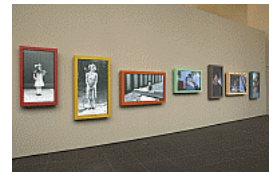
Gillian Wearing

Snapshot

2005

Seven-channel color and black-and-white video installation for framed flatscreen monitors, with sound, 6 min., 55 sec.

Private collection



Gillian Wearing

A Typical Trentino Family

2008

Bronze on marble base, with metal plaque

17 11/16 x 13 x 13 inches (45 x 33 x 33 cm) overall

Courtesy the artist



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Thannhauser 4

Gillian Wearing

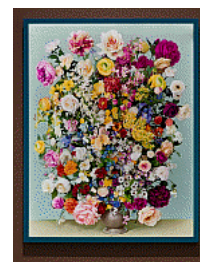
Everyone

2014

Lightbox

41 3/4 x 33 1/16 x 1 9/16 inches (106 x 84 x 4 cm)

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

A Real Birmingham Family

2015

Bronze on granite base

15 3/4 x 19 7/8 x 7 1/16 inches (40 x 50.5 x 18 cm)

Collection of Maureen Paley



Gillian Wearing

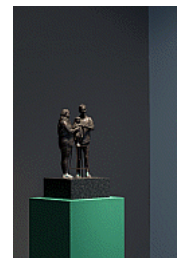
A Real Danish Family

2017

Painted bronze on granite base

17 11/16 x 9 7/16 x 7 7/8 in. (45 x 24 x 20 cm)

Collection of Maureen Paley



Gillian Wearing

Diane Arbus

2021

Painted bronze

19 3/8 x 4 1/2 x 3 3/4 in. (49.2 x 11.4 x 9.5 cm)

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Tower 5

Gillian Wearing

Homage to the woman with the bandaged face who I saw yesterday down Walworth Road

1995

Black-and-white and color video, with sound, 7 min.

Tony Podesta Collection, Washington, D.C.



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

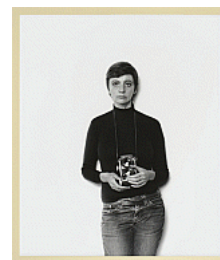
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 5

Gillian Wearing
Masks Archive
 2000-19
 18 silicone masks with wigs
 Dimensions variable
 Courtesy the artist



Gillian Wearing
Me as Arbus
 2008
 Framed gelatin silver bromide print
 61 7/16 x 52 3/8 x 1 1/4 in. (156 x 133 x 3.2 cm)
 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, Ralph M. Parsons Fund



Gillian Wearing
Me as Mapplethorpe
 2009
 Framed gelatin silver bromide print
 62 5/8 x 51 9/16 x 1 1/4 in. (159 x 131 x 3.2 cm)
 Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, Purchase

Based upon the Robert Mapplethorpe work *Self Portrait*, 1988. © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation



Gillian Wearing
Me as Warhol in Drag with Scar
 2010
 Framed gelatin silver bromide print
 61 7/16 x 52 3/8 x 1 1/4 in. (156 x 133 x 3.2 cm)
 Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, Gift of Carla Emil and Rich Silverstein.



Gillian Wearing
People
 2011
 Framed gelatin silver bromide print
 60 x 42 x 1 1/4 in. (152.4 x 106.7 x 3.2 cm)
 Private collection



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

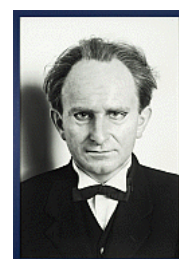
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 5

Gillian Wearing
Me as Cahun Holding a Mask of My Face
 2012
 Framed gelatin silver bromide print
 61 15/16 x 50 13/16 x 1 5/16 in. (157.3 x 129 x 3.3 cm)
 The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Gift of the Heather and Tony Podesta Collection



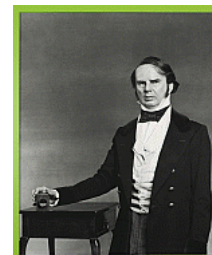
Gillian Wearing
Me as Sander
 2012
 Framed gelatin silver bromide print
 61 15/16 x 42 1/8 x 1 1/4 in. (157.3 x 107 x 3.2 cm)
 Collection of Tanya Bonakdar



Gillian Wearing
Me as Weegee
 2013
 Framed gelatin silver bromide print
 61 15/16 x 42 1/8 x 1 1/4 in. (157.3 x 107 x 3.2 cm)
 The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Gift of the Heather and Tony Podesta Collection



Gillian Wearing
Me as Talbot
 2013
 Framed gelatin silver bromide print
 62 3/8 x 52 3/16 x 1 1/4 in. (158.5 x 132.5 x 3.2 cm)
 Collection of Elaine Goldman and John Benis



Gillian Wearing
Me and Claude in Mirror
 2017
 Framed gelatin silver bromide print
 20 5/8 x 15 1/2 x 1 1/4 in. (52.4 x 39.4 x 3.2 cm)
 Collection of Carla Emil and Rich Silverstein



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 5

Gillian Wearing

Cahun and Wearing

2017

Framed gelatin silver bromide print

21 3/8 x 17 1/2 x 1 1/4 inches (54.3 x 44.5 x 3.2 cm)

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Me as Madame and Monsieur Duchamp

2018

Two framed gelatin silver bromide prints

44 x 64 1/4 x 1 1/4 in. (111.8 x 163.2 x 3.2 cm) overall

Thomson Family Collection, Minneapolis



Gillian Wearing

Me as Dürer

2018

Framed chromogenic print

60 x 45 1/16 x 1 1/4 in. (152.4 x 114.5 x 3.2 cm)

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

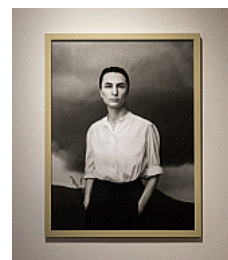
Me as O'Keeffe

2018

Framed gelatin silver bromide print

60 x 45 x 1 1/4 in. (152.4 x 114.3 x 3.2 cm)

Collection of Carla Emil and Rich Silverstein



Gillian Wearing

Me as Eva Hesse

2019

Framed chromogenic print

60 x 45 1/8 x 1 1/4 in. (152.4 x 114.5 x 3.2 cm)

Collection of Tamar Efrat, New York



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 5

Gillian Wearing
Me as Meret Oppenheim
 2019
 Framed gelatin silver bromide print
 63 1/4 x 48 3/4 x 1 1/4 in. (160.8 x 123.8 x 3.2 cm)
 Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles

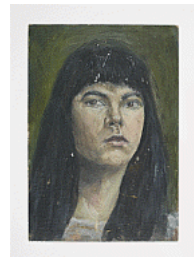


Gillian Wearing
Me as Julia Margaret Cameron and Two Muses
 2019
 Framed gelatin silver bromide print
 63 1/2 x 49 3/4 x 1 1/4 in. (161.2 x 126.3 x 3.2 cm)
 Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Tower 7

Gillian Wearing
Self-Portrait
 1985
 Oil on board
 10 x 6 7/8 in. (25.5 x 17.5 cm)
 Thomson Family Collection, Minneapolis



Gillian Wearing
My Polaroid Years
 1988-2005
 148 dye fusion transfer prints (Polaroids)
 4 1/4 x 3 1/2 in. (10.8 x 8.9 cm) or 4 x 4 in. (10.2 x 10.2 cm) each
 Tony Podesta Collection, Washington, D.C.



Gillian Wearing
Me: Me
 1991
 Gelatin silver bromide print mounted on aluminium
 20 3/16 x 17 1/16 in. (51.3 x 43.4 cm)
 Tony Podesta Collection, Washington, D.C.



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 7

Gillian Wearing
Self-Portrait of Me Now in Mask
 2011
 Framed chromogenic print
 48 13/16 x 38 9/16 x 1 3/16 in. (124 x 98 x 3 cm)
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Modern Women's Fund



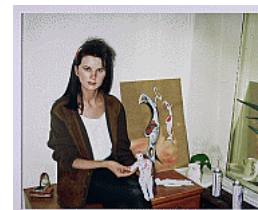
Gillian Wearing
Self-Portrait at 27 Years Old
 2012
 Chromogenic print
 77 x 14 1/2 inches (195.6 x 36.8 cm)
 Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing
Me as My Ideal Self
 2012
 Acrylic paint on Masonite in custom frame; ink on paper; and photographs under glass
 closed: 46 x 22 1/2 x 1 15/16 in. (116.8 x 57.1 x 5 cm); open: 46 x 44 15/16 x 1 in. (116.8 x 114.2 x 2.5 cm)
 Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing
Me as an Artist in 1984
 2014
 Framed chromogenic print
 51 1/4 x 63 x 1 3/8 in. (130.2 x 160 x 3.5 cm)
 Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing
My Fortune and Misfortune
 2014
 Resin, marble dust, oil paint, and indelible ink, two parts
 2 x 8 1/2 x 4 3/4 in. (5.1 x 21.6 x 12.1 cm) each
 Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 7

Gillian Wearing

Rock 'n' Roll 70

2015

Two chromogenic prints, framed

51 9/16 x 75 9/16 in. x 1 1/4 (131 x 192 x 3.2 cm)

Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Museum purchase with funds from the International Contemporary Collectors, 2016



Gillian Wearing

Me as a Ghost

2015

Framed chromogenic print

51 3/4 x 36 x 1 1/4 in. (131.5 x 91.5 x 3.2 cm)

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Rock 'n' Roll 70

2015

Printed wallpaper

Dimensions variable

Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Museum purchase with funds from the International Contemporary Collectors, 2016



Gillian Wearing

Kiss of Life

2017

Platinum silicone, human hair, and wood, in vitrine

63 x 23 5/8 x 23 5/8 inches (160 x 60 x 60 cm) overall

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London



Gillian Wearing in collaboration with Wieden + Kennedy

Wearing, Gillian

2018

Color video, with sound, 5 min.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Purchased with funds contributed by the Photography Council, 2019

2019.67



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 7

Gillian Wearing

Me as Mona Lisa

2020

Framed chromogenic print

24 1/4 x 19 1/8 x 1 1/4 in (61.6 x 48.6 x 3.2 cm)

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing

Lockdown Portrait 1

2020

Watercolor on paper

11 7/8 x 9 in. (30.3 x 22.8 cm)

Collection of Kathy Kenny



Gillian Wearing

Lockdown Portrait 2

2020

Watercolor on paper

12 1/4 x 9 1/8 in. (31 x 23 cm)

Collection of Jonathan Wearing



Gillian Wearing

Lockdown Portrait 3

2020

Watercolor on paper

12 1/4 x 9 1/8 in. (31 x 23 cm)

Halamish Collection, London



Gillian Wearing

Lockdown Portrait 4

2020

Watercolor on paper

12 1/8 x 9 1/8 in. (30.9 x 23 cm)

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 7

Gillian Wearing
Lockdown Portrait 5
2020
Watercolor on paper
12 x 8 3/8 in. (30.4 x 21.2 cm)
Collection of Robert Violette, London



Gillian Wearing
Lockdown Portrait 6
2020
Watercolor on paper
12 1/8 x 9 1/8 in. (30.9 x 23 cm)
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London



Gillian Wearing
Lockdown Portrait 8
2020
Watercolor on paper
11 5/8 x 8 1/4 in. (29.5 x 20.8 cm)
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London



Gillian Wearing
Untitled (Lockdown portrait)
2020
Oil on board
12 1/8 x 16 in. (30.5 x 40.5 cm)
Zabludowicz Collection



Gillian Wearing
Untitled (Lockdown portrait)
2020
Oil on board
16 x 12 1/8 in. (40.5 x 30.5 cm)
Private collection, courtesy Tajan SA



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 7

Gillian Wearing
Untitled (Lockdown portrait)
2020
Oil on board
16 x 12 1/8 in. (40.5 x 30.5 cm)
Private collection, London



Gillian Wearing
Untitled (Lockdown portrait)
2020
Oil on board
11 3/4 x 11 3/4 in. (30 x 30 cm)
Sigrid and Stephen Kirk Collection



Gillian Wearing
Mask Masked
2020
Wax, fabric mask, and steel rod on wood base
sculpture: 22 1/16 x 5 1/2 x 3 15/16 in. (56 x 14 x 10 cm); base: 36 1/4 x 14 15/16 x 11 in. (92 x 38 x 28 cm)
Zabludowicz Collection



Gillian Wearing
My Charms
2021
Bronze chain, 3D-printed objects, and mixed media
approx. length 13 ft. (3.97 m)
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Friday, November 5, 2021 – Monday, April 4, 2022)

Tower 7

Gillian Wearing

Me in History—A Conversation with the Work of Fantin-Latour

2021

Oil on canvas

22 7/16 x 43 5/16 in. (57 x 110 cm)

Private collection, London



New Media Theater

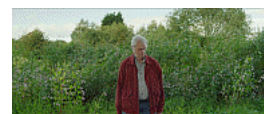
Gillian Wearing

We Are Here

2014

Color video projection, with sound, 21 min.

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks Audio

Listen to curators Jennifer Blessing and Nat Trotman discuss the key themes of Wearing's work and reflect on the factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, that helped to shape the exhibition. (Spanish and Mandarin translations of this content will be available in the coming weeks.)

In addition to the interpretive audio, the Digital Guide contains verbal descriptions designed for blind or low-vision visitors of six works on view in the exhibition.

Listen on the Guggenheim Digital Guide, a part of the Bloomberg Connects app, or at guggenheim.org/gillianwearing.

Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks Audio Stop List

#400: Exhibition Introduction	#405: Spiritual Family	#550: Description of <i>Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere</i> (2018)
#401: Public Engagement	#406: <i>Me as Julia Margaret Cameron and Two Muses</i> (2019)	#551: Description of <i>Self-Portrait as My Brother Richard Wearing</i> (2003)
#402: <i>Dancing in Peckham</i> (1994)	#407: Self-Portraits	#552: Description of <i>Everyone</i> (2014)
#403: Family	#408: <i>Lockdown series</i> (2020)	#553: Description of <i>Me as Mapplethorpe</i> (2009)
#404: <i>Self-Portrait</i> (2000)		#554: Description of <i>Mask Masked</i> (2020)
		#555: Description of <i>Rock 'n' Roll 70</i> (2015)

Using the Guggenheim Digital Guide

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- Verbal description audio for blind and low-vision audiences
- Commentary in American Sign Language
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- Content in multiple languages

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Available Content



Verbal Description



Other Languages Available



Sign Language Description



Kids' Content



Building Guide

About the Guggenheim Digital Guide, a Part of the Bloomberg Connects App

Enhance your experience at the Guggenheim Museum with our Digital Guide, a part of the Bloomberg Connects app, which presents insights and perspectives that will deepen your understanding of the exhibitions, the artworks, and the building. You'll hear from artists, curators, educators, and scholars, as well members of the greater Guggenheim and New York communities, including conservators, art handlers, students, and musicians.

Download the Bloomberg Connects app for free on the Apple App or Google Play stores, or by scanning the QR code.




For over thirty years, British conceptual artist Gillian Wearing (b. 1963) has explored the tensions between self and society in an increasingly media-saturated world. *Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks* gathers over one hundred photographs, videos, paintings, and sculptures that examine how people establish a sense of self within familial, social, and historical contexts, especially in the aftermath of trauma. Focused equally on self-portraiture and on conveying the stories of others, Wearing's art interrogates documentary traditions while evoking the culture of social media. Masks appear both as literal props and as metaphors for the daily performances each of us stage as individuals. Profoundly empathetic and psychologically intense, her work questions fixed notions of identity and tests the boundaries between the private and public.

This gallery highlights works that Wearing has made in collaboration with others, often in public space. For instance, in her early series *Signs that say what you want them to say and not Signs that say what someone else wants you to say* (1992–93), Wearing photographed strangers on the streets of London holding sheets of paper on which they had written their spontaneous thoughts. In so doing, she changed the terms of documentary street photography and performance art by giving voice to her subjects. Wearing stresses this democratic impulse by presenting the snapshot-like images in large groups, conjuring a crowd of people in the gallery space.

With *Signs* Wearing established herself as a key figure in a generation of artists who, in the 1990s, adopted the aesthetics of mass media to explore the complexity of interpersonal relations. In the years since, she has continued to engage the public through classified ads, casting calls, and direct solicitation, asking people to share their private stories with a wider audience. These projects have included videos in which anonymous individuals in masks confess their most intimate secrets and fears; public sculptures that uplift ordinary citizens to the status of heroes; and a crowdsourced film amassing landscapes from every country on earth. These works highlight the tension between people's interior lives and the brave faces they put on for others.

Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks is organized by Jennifer Blessing, Senior Curator, Photography, and Nat Trotman, Curator, Performance and Media, with X Zhu-Nowell, Assistant Curator, and Ksenia Soboleva, Marica and Jan Vilcek Curatorial Fellow.

The exhibition continues on Tower Levels 4, 5, and 7, and in the New Media Theater.

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#GillianWearing

Confessional Booths

In 1994–95 Wearing made *Confess All on Video. Don't Worry, You Will Be in Disguise. Intrigued? Call Gillian...*, the first in a series of videos in which members of the public recount deeply personal stories. Wearing locates the participants for these works through open casting calls, prompting volunteers to come forward with their most closely held secrets. In order to create a safe space where volunteers can speak without fear of being identified and stigmatized, she offers them store-bought or custom masks to wear. The final videos are then displayed in enclosed structures that revive the intimacy of the recordings, casting audiences as witnesses to narratives of shame, guilt, anxiety, and trauma.

Fear and Loathing (2014) is the most recent of Wearing's confessional booth installations, as well as the largest. Shot on location in Los Angeles using professional silicone masks, it references Hollywood film production, even borrowing its title from Terry Gilliam's 1998 movie *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. The featured stories seem to blur truth and fiction, taking on a surrealistic quality that is at once absurd and all too plausible. Over the course of the video, fifteen individuals appear on two vertical screens, disclosing their greatest phobias and hatreds. Some of the speakers are victims of circumstance, while others admit to being perpetrators. Only their pained eyes, gazing out from their masks, give a clue as to the true identities behind their confessions.

Dancing in Peckham documents a rare public performance by Wearing, and marks her first appearance as the subject of her own artwork. Inspired by a woman the artist observed feverishly dancing at a jazz concert, Wearing videotaped herself in a shopping center in South London, where she danced for a half hour to music held only in her own mind. Her silent choreography touches on emotions ranging from blissful reverie to mania; passing shoppers regard her performance with a mix of suspicion and apathy. In this way *Dancing in Peckham* highlights the fragile norms by which society distinguishes psychic interiority from public self-presentation, paying homage to those who dare to step outside such conventions.

60 Minutes Silence depicts a feat of endurance in which twenty-six individuals attempt to pose for the camera for one hour. This act refers, in part, to the long exposure times of early photography, and indeed, the piece appears at first to be a generic group portrait of a London police squad. In fact, the video's subjects are not officers at all but rather civilians in costume. Wearing's focus in this work is the symbolic power of the uniform: how it can cast a diverse group of people under a singular identity that imposes real social and physical restrictions. It is not a coincidence that the constraints in the video—silence and stillness—are commonly used by police. But as the minutes tick by and participants grow increasingly uncomfortable, individual characteristics peek through the uniformity, revealing that all systems of control ultimately have their limits.

Since 1996 Wearing has cast professional actors in her videos in addition to working with nonactors. Her interest in the methods and effects of dramatic acting extend naturally from her examinations into the everyday performance of public life. On stage, emotional authenticity can be scripted and rehearsed, and actors often redirect personal experiences to express a character's truth. At the same time, victims of trauma sometimes recount their stories as though reading a script. This paradoxical relationship between acted and actual reality underlies many of Wearing's works, including her feature-length film *Self Made* (2010).

The video *Bully* is set in a Method-acting workshop. In this piece a man named James reenacts a scene from his youth where he was the victim of bullying. Casting his fellow actors as bystanders, bullies, and himself, he attempts to represent his experience as realistically as possible. Wearing documents this process, observing as the lines between director and actor erode and the scene builds toward a moment of reckoning and catharsis.

Wearing's public sculptures quietly confront the traditions of historical monuments, asking who among us should be so elevated and how should they get there. The series *Everyday Heroes* (2010–12) consists of three proposed monuments to members of the police or armed forces. Like the subjects in *60 Minutes Silence* (1996), these figures occupy social roles that imply power and authority. Yet as individuals they also bear their own histories of trauma, which are relayed on plaques accompanying each model. Depicting each person in street clothes and by first name only, Wearing reminds us how common these kinds of personal narratives are, and yet also how unique.

Your Views is a web-based film project in which Wearing invites participants to submit a brief video of a curtain or shade opening to reveal the view from their window. The artist likens this action to drawing the curtain on a theater stage or opening the shutter of a camera, and considers each view submitted to be a refracted portrait of the person who shot it. Eight years into the project, Wearing continues to accept submissions with the goal of featuring at least one clip from every nation on earth. As a result, *Your Views* expresses a sense of togetherness across both space and time, as the repetition of a simple gesture reveals a breadth of difference and similarity in people's lives around the world—an act that has become all the more poignant as the COVID-19 pandemic has induced a new sense of global synchronicity.

Submit your own view at yourviewsfilm.com.

Wearing's most prominent public work to date is a sculpture commemorating Millicent Fawcett (1847–1929), one of England's most famous suffragists. Erected on the centenary of the year women won the right to vote in the United Kingdom, this is the first monument dedicated to a woman, and also the first by a woman, to be commissioned for London's Parliament Square. Fawcett was selected as this work's subject through an online petition that garnered more than 74,000 signatures—a process that hearkens to Fawcett's tireless fight for a more equal, participatory society. Wearing honors this democratic impulse by etching the sculpture's base with images of fifty-nine women and men who also fought for women's suffrage. In Fawcett's hands she places a banner that reads, "Courage calls to courage everywhere," nodding to her own series *Signs that say what you want them to say and not Signs that say what someone else wants you to say* (1992–93), and highlighting the importance of the collective voice in achieving social change.

For over thirty years, British conceptual artist Gillian Wearing (b. 1963) has explored the tensions between self and society in an increasingly media-saturated world. *Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks* gathers over one hundred photographs, videos, paintings, and sculptures that examine how people establish a sense of self within familial, social, and historical contexts, especially in the aftermath of trauma. Focused equally on self-portraiture and on conveying the stories of others, Wearing's art interrogates documentary traditions while evoking the culture of social media. Masks appear both as literal props and as metaphors for the daily performances each of us stage as individuals. Profoundly empathetic and psychologically intense, her work questions fixed notions of identity and tests the boundaries between the private and public.

This gallery features Wearing's explorations of family: how relationships with our parents, siblings, or children lay a foundation for who we are and how we present ourselves to the world. Her works tackle this complex theme from many directions, unpacking the nuances of kinship through role-playing, staged commentaries, and references to television and the history of photography. For *Family Album* (2003–06) Wearing created prosthetic replicas of the faces of her grandparents, parents, uncle, brother, sister, and self, and then donned each mask in order to re-create old family photographs. At first glance the figures seem to be real, or possibly wax replicas, but a closer look reveals the gaps around the masks' eye openings. Through this visual disruption Wearing evokes the ways in which our familial relations can both protect and confine our sense of self.

Besides her own relatives, Wearing's subjects often include individuals she seeks out, as in the videos *2 into 1* (1997) and *Family History* (2006). Throughout these projects her approach is interpersonal. Frequently she asks members of a family unit to reflect on their relationships with one another, then exposes the rifts between their differing viewpoints. The emotional honesty of Wearing's work reveals family to be a source of pain as much as love, while also underscoring how unique each person's experience of the same family can be. As multiple accounts of what is "real" or "true" emerge, Wearing reminds us that even our closest relations are ultimately unknowable—but that the act of imagining ourselves in their place can be profoundly meaningful.

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#GillianWearing

Family Monuments

In 2008, after years of engaging the public through video and photography, Wearing turned to the medium of sculpture to further investigate the ways people represent themselves in social spaces. Erected in parks and plazas, her public sculptures quietly confront the traditions of historical monuments, asking who among us should be so elevated and how should they get there. Wearing's subjects have included ordinary citizens and overlooked historical figures, as in the *Everyday Heroes* series (2010–12) and her 2018 monument to British suffragist Millicent Fawcett, on view in Tower Level 2. Most recently she has created an homage to artist Diane Arbus, which is currently on view at Doris C. Freedman Plaza at the southeast entrance to Central Park.

Wearing's first public sculptures honored families from Italy, England, and Denmark, starting with *A Typical Trentino Family* (2008) and continuing with *A Real Birmingham Family* (2015) and *A Real Danish Family* (2017). Each of these projects began with an open competition in which families applied to be rendered as a life-size bronze statue. Wearing assigned the responsibility of selecting each family to a local jury, and in the case of *A Real Danish Family*, the application and casting process was supported by a nationwide media campaign that resulted in a three-part television program. In this way, Wearing ensured that the choices behind each representation were as much a part of the artwork as the final sculptures themselves: Who determines what constitutes a family, and what is typical or real? Whereas traditional monuments seem bound to harness or silence civic discussion, these projects sought to address their own underpinnings with transparency and, in the process, to destabilize the authority of the final monuments.

Wearing's first video to feature professional actors, *Sacha and Mum* explores the complex, contradictory nature of a mother-daughter relationship. It depicts a young woman who repeatedly covers her face with a towel as she engages in a physical altercation with a matronly older woman. Shot in an unprepossessing bedroom, the videotape speeds up and slows, lurches forward and back. The figures' interaction expresses a shifting dynamic of power and affect that suggests, at some moments, a domineering, irrational mother and her defensive daughter and, at others, a disturbed child and a protective parent. In this dreamlike piece Wearing visualizes the emotional impact of the traumatic memories her confessional subjects narrate—what goes on behind closed doors—and the instability of memory itself.

In *2 into 1* Wearing uncovers the complex love-hate dynamic between a mother and her twin eleven-year-old boys. In a form of media-induced ventriloquism, a dark-haired woman lip-synchs words spoken by one or the other of her children as they take turns describing her. Then the scene shifts to the blond boys, who alternately voice their mother's comments about each of them. Their lip-synching operates as a kind of vocal masking, suggestive of how children's brutal honesty becomes suppressed in adulthood, even as childhood experience continues to inform adult identity.

In the late 1990s Wearing created several works with a group of London street drinkers, exploring the intense relationships that can form between members of an impromptu family bound together by addiction. In her series *A Woman Called Theresa*, Wearing photographed one of the drinkers, Theresa, with seven different male lovers in their bedrooms and then accompanied each image with the man's handwritten remarks about her. These commentaries observe their subject with a mix of emotions, coming together to form a multifaceted portrait that reveals—and conceals—as much about the writers as about Theresa herself.

Wearing has often noted the impact of television on her practice, citing the medium's flexibility and participatory nature. Of particular importance to her was the 1974 series *The Family*, an early fly-on-the-wall documentary that chronicled the daily lives of the Wilkinses, a "typical" working-class family from Reading, England. Wearing reflects on this influence in *Family History*, a video installation that focuses on Heather Wilkins, the youngest daughter on *The Family*.

For this piece Wearing staged a fake daytime television program in which talk show host Trisha Goddard interviews Wilkins, now a forty-seven-year-old woman, about the experience of having her private life made public on TV. The program is projected in a screening room that viewers enter through a brightly colored vestibule featuring a vintage light fixture and a small monitor that plays a video of a young girl—a stand-in for the artist—watching *The Family* in a 1970s-era living room. In this way Wearing suggests the complex processes of exposure, identification, and validation that, with the advent of reality television and social media, have become ever-present aspects of cultural life.

Nancy Gregory marks the first time Wearing adopted the role of a family member on camera. In this short, looping video, she meticulously remakes a snapshot that her mother took of Wearing's aged, housebound maternal grandmother, who had fallen asleep while taking fresh air in her yard. Wearing is shown slumped in a wheelchair, her face completely obscured by a beribboned straw hat, in a precise restaging of the original picture. The scene is indiscernible as a moving image except for the scant fronds that lightly sway in the breeze and a couple of idly circling insects. Audio of chirping birds, an airplane passing overhead, and an emergency-vehicle siren convey a sense of the world passing by her grandmother, who sits as motionless as a cemetery monument.

Snapshot extends the process of historical re-creation Wearing began in the *Family Album* series (2003–06) by reimagining old photographs as short, looping films. Each of the seven videos in the work is set in a different decade of the twentieth century, and features a female subject of a different age. As viewers scan from left to right, they witness a cycle of life as well as a condensed history of self-presentation through vernacular photography. This act of time travel culminates in the installation's dual soundtrack. While the ambient sound of the violin played by the girl in the leftmost video draws viewers into the past, a second track—available on nearby handsets—features a monologue in which an elderly woman recounts feelings of frustration, anger, and loneliness. Giving voice to these feelings, her anonymous confession makes visible a universal experience that is too often erased from public view.

This small sculpture is a replica of Wearing's life-size tribute to Diane Arbus (1923–1971), which is currently on view at Doris C. Freedman Plaza in Central Park. For this statue Wearing presents Arbus as she looked in the 1960s, holding her twin-lens reflex camera, which she used in Central Park to make some of her most important work. Noting the dearth of monuments in New York City honoring women and artists, Wearing chose to present Arbus not in the heroic style of traditional commemorative sculptures of “great men” but rather as an ordinary person, with whom any of us could identify.

Wearing's Central Park installation, *Gillian Wearing: Diane Arbus*, is organized by Public Art Fund.



Installation view, Gillian Wearing, *Diane Arbus*, 2021. Painted bronze. Presented by Public Art Fund at Doris C. Freedman Plaza, Central Park, October 20, 2021–August 14, 2022. Photo: Nicholas Knight, courtesy Public Art Fund, N.Y.


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On view in this gallery are all of the photographs made to date in Wearing's ongoing series *Spiritual Family* (2008–). For her previous series of self-portraits, *Family Album* (2003–06), she deployed silicone prosthetics, wigs, and lighting to disguise herself in the visages of her family of origin as they appear in old snapshots. Subsequently, with *Spiritual Family* she produced similarly constructed images of herself as members of her family of choice: pivotal art-historical figures with whom she feels creative kinship. By literally embodying each artist, Wearing was attempting to feel what it was like to be them. For viewers, her animated eyes staring out from behind masks of deceased elders enhance the uncanny feeling of both familiarity and estrangement.

In the first self-portraits in the *Spiritual Family* series, Wearing represents herself as photographers old enough to have been her grandparent or parent; more recently she has expanded her repertoire to include painters and sculptors, and delved further into the past. The photographs are predominantly black-and-white—a nod to the history of photography the series celebrates—and the featured artists are often revered as much for how they looked and lived their lives as for their work. Wearing melds their aesthetic decisions with her own and yet her high-resolution images reveal the artifice of the carefully wrought masks and costumes she wears, documenting a performance for the camera that recalls the theatrical nature of everyday life. Wearing's interpretations of each artist's self-images offer clues to her ideas about artistic identity and celebrity, while providing a primer on self-portraiture and commemorating those who are pictured.

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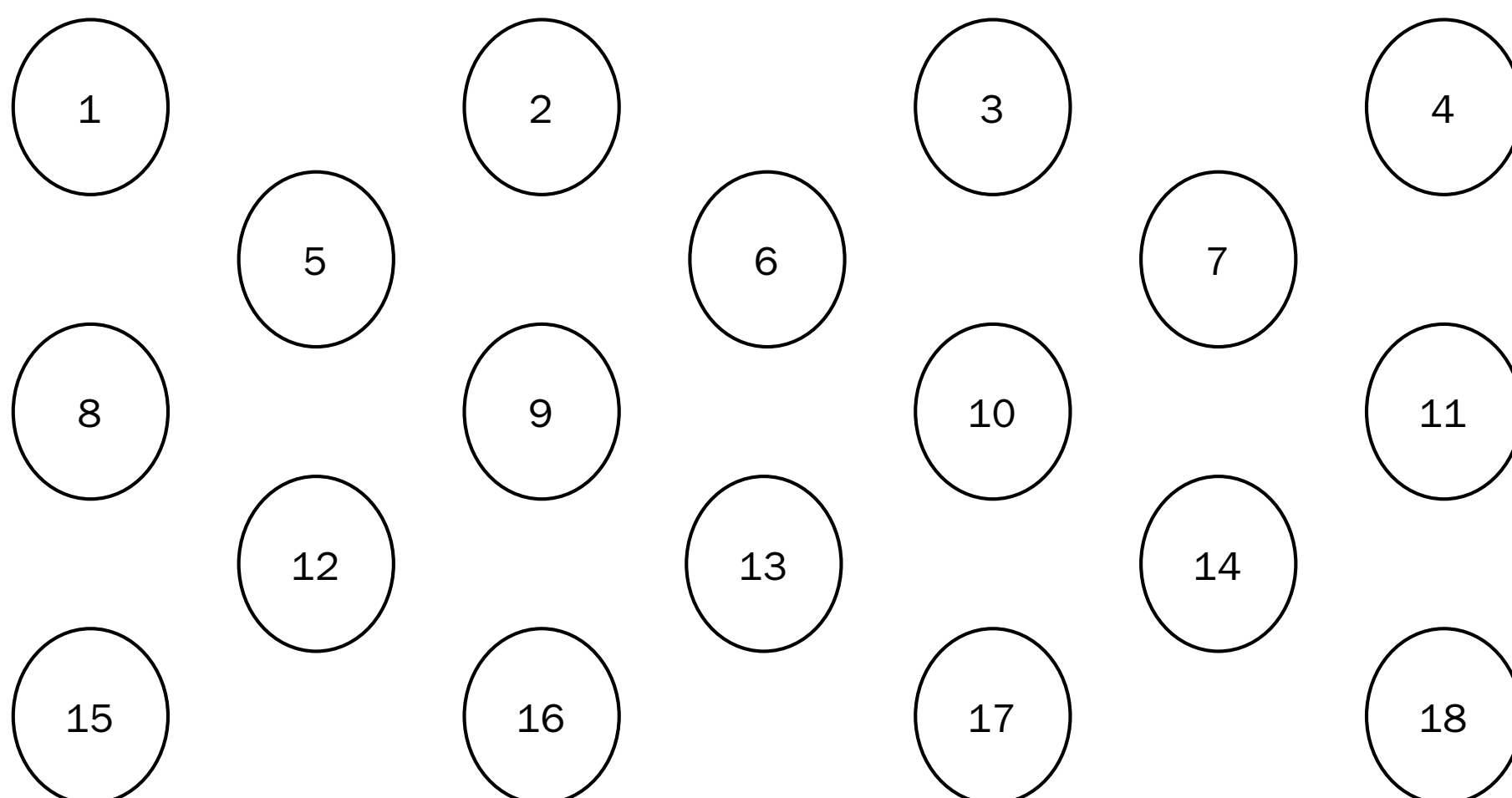
#GillianWearing

Mask Archive

This gallery features a display of masks from Wearing's personal archive. In the mid-1990s, for the first of her confessional videos, Wearing provided participants with store-bought novelty masks to preserve their anonymity. For *Self-Portrait* (2000, on view in Tower Level 4), Wearing photographed herself in a plastic mask that was made from a cast of her face. This is the first work in which Wearing wears an actual mask, as well as the first self-portrait in which she appears masked as herself.

The masks Wearing has used in subsequent self-portraits to disguise herself as others have become increasingly lifelike. In her *Family Album* series (2003–06), she wore elaborate silicone prosthetics and wigs to create uncanny reconstructions of family portrait photographs. The masks for these shoots, produced with the assistance of professionals trained at Madame Tussauds wax museum, allowed Wearing to embody her family members as well as herself as a toddler and teenager.

Wearing's masks from her *Spiritual Family* series (2008–) are shown here in their entirety for the first time, along with a mask of her brother from the *Family Album* series, and three self-portrait masks of herself at different ages.



1
Me as Weegee, 2013

2
Me as Julia Margaret Cameron and Two Muses, 2019

3
Me as O'Keeffe, 2018

4
Me as Sander, 2012

5
Me as Madame and Monsieur Duchamp, 2018 (Monsieur Duchamp)

6
Me as Arbus, 2008

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Wearing's short video *Homage to the woman with the bandaged face who I saw yesterday down Walworth Road* unfolds in three acts. The first is a documentary-style reenactment of the artist's sighting of the titular woman, for which Wearing covers her face with a bandage-like gauze mask and walks along a busy market street in London. In the next act she records the reactions of passersby from the woman's perspective. Finally she shoots a group of mechanics at a local garage who do not know what to make of her. This is the first instance in Wearing's oeuvre in which she wears a sort of mask. While the plastic masks she provided to the participants in her first confessional video, made in 1994, were intended to disguise, the bandaged woman's face-covering is more a vehicle for the artist to try on a different identity, that of a person who is literally unable to fully hide her wounds in public and instead draws attention in her attempt at concealment.

As the first photograph in the *Spiritual Family* series, *Me as Arbus* signals Wearing's deep admiration for the American photographer Diane Arbus (1923–1971). Renowned for her groundbreaking approach to portraiture as well as for her tragic biography, Arbus was fascinated by the masquerade of identity in both theatrical settings and everyday life. She identified with many of her subjects, at times to the extent that her uncanny images seem like displaced self-portraits of their maker.

As in all the *Spiritual Family* works that would follow, Wearing based *Me as Arbus* on meticulous research, drawing from pictures of Arbus taken by herself and by others. In this image Wearing-as-Arbus coolly confronts the viewer, her iconic twin-lens reflex camera in hand. The directness of this portrayal reflects qualities that imbue both artists' practices: an empathetic desire to give voice and visibility to people who are often ignored and overlooked, without judgment or sentiment.

Wearing's ongoing contemplation of both mortality and the artist as an immortalized celebrity figure is embodied in the second *Spiritual Family* work, *Me as Mapplethorpe*, Wearing's tribute to the American photographer Robert Mapplethorpe (1946–1989). For this photograph Wearing painstakingly re-created an iconic self-portrait that Mapplethorpe made in 1988, not long before his death from AIDS complications. In the original image Mapplethorpe's masklike face looms out of darkness; it is almost a twin of the skull topping the cane he grasps in his hand. Wearing has noted the bravery with which Mapplethorpe confronted his fate. For her self-portrait she replaces the photographer's psychologically intense gaze with her own in an effort to understand how Mapplethorpe felt as he faced the camera.

For *Me as Warhol in Drag with Scar*, Wearing combined elements from two famous photo shoots of American artist Andy Warhol (1928–1987): a 1981 image of the artist in drag by Christopher Makos and a visceral 1968 shot by Richard Avedon of Warhol displaying the freshly healed wounds to his torso that resulted from a recent attempt on his life.

Throughout *Spiritual Family Wearing* slips fluidly between masculine and feminine genders; she also selects artists who notably photographed queer subjects, including themselves. Furthermore, the artists initially featured in the series—Warhol, Diane Arbus, and Robert Mapplethorpe—all created work that referenced mortality, and tragically died before their time. Photographs of these artists, by their own or others' hands, have yielded them mythic status, transcending their unnaturally shortened existences. Based exclusively on people who are no longer alive, all of Wearing's *Spiritual Family* self-portraits are commemorative tributes.

Me as Cahun Holding a Mask of My Face marks the beginning of Wearing's engagement with the work of the French Surrealist writer, artist, and activist Claude Cahun (the androgynous pseudonym of Lucy Schwob, 1894–1954), who is best known for their prescient, gender-questioning self-portraits. In their writing, image-making, and daily life, Cahun conceived of identity as a mask, and gender as mutable. For this work Wearing took as inspiration an enigmatic self-portrait from around 1927 in which Cahun poses as a boy comic-strip character brought to life as a weight lifter. In place of Cahun's original barbells, Wearing-as-Cahun holds in her right hand a rod with a mask of her own face appended to it. In many of the French artist's images, the personae Cahun posits are nonbinary; gender polarities collapse into a unitary androgynous subject, or multiply into a panoply of alternately more or less masculine or feminine selves. The mask that Wearing holds in *Me as Cahun* is likewise not specifically gendered.

In 2012 and the following year, Wearing created self-portraits of three photography forefathers recognized for their documentary portraiture and their promotion of photography as an art form: August Sander, Weegee, and William Henry Fox Talbot. Often shot outdoors, the seemingly casual, frontal portraits of German photographer Sander (1876–1964) defined a cutting-edge reportage approach. Sander applied this objective style to his legendary uncompleted project to comprehensively represent the people of his time based on their roles in German society. Despite the social masks Sander's sitters present to the world, their keenly recorded features and direct gazes convey their individuality. For *Me as Sander* Wearing hews closely to a 1925 self-portrait by the photographer, faithfully reiterating, with minimal intervention, his starkly rendered face and piercing eyes.

In this photograph Wearing appears in the guise of Weegee (Arthur Fellig, 1899–1968), the flamboyant American tabloid and experimental photographer. Sporting a suit, she conveys a decorum that belies the photographer's career as an ambulance-chaser and frequent witness to shocking violence. Yet Wearing manages to capture the unbridled dynamism of the man and his work through the manner in which she, as Weegee, leans into the frame and gazes intensely at the camera. Wearing's self-portrait is unusual in that Weegee was often photographed working, holding up an oversize flash camera, with a cigar stub clenched in his teeth. She instead depicts him posed in a studio with a cigarillo in his hand, white smoke wafting in an abstract pattern against the black background. This detail references Weegee's penchant for photographing smokers, a *vanitas* evocation of the fleeting moment and perhaps a nod to his surrealistic experiments in the darkroom.

Me as Talbot pays tribute to William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877), the staid British pioneer of photography and inventor of the technique that enabled paper copies of images. In her self-portrait, Wearing appears standing beside a table in formal waistcoat and jacket, right hand holding a camera, in a pose that synthesizes two or more nineteenth-century portraits of Talbot. Wearing's rigid comportment references the long exposures required by early photography, as well as the solemn conventions of society portraiture. Her facial prosthetic replicates Talbot's serious, masklike visage, an indicator of the lofty professional status he sought for the revolutionary technology he developed.

Me as Madame and Monsieur Duchamp is a punning double self-portrait of the progenitor of conceptualism, French artist Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968). In this piece Wearing transforms herself into both halves of a married couple: one image shows Wearing as Duchamp dressed in suit and tie; the other, Wearing as Duchamp in drag as his famous alter ego and brand spokeswoman, Rose Sélavy, whose name is a play on the French phrase *Eros, c'est la vie*, or “Eros, such is life.” Madame’s and monsieur’s photographs are set in a giant locket, a nod to Duchamp’s readymade artworks, which he created by transforming everyday objects into nonfunctional conceptual art through simple recontextualization. In the oversize trinket, Mr. and Mrs. Duchamp mirror each other, casting masculinity and femininity as two sides of the same coin.

In 2018 Wearing created an eerily faithful simulation of Albrecht Dürer's painted *Self-Portrait at Twenty-Eight* (1500), an image notorious for its iconic presentation of the German artist (1471–1528) in the style of devotional paintings of Christ. While the exact meaning of Dürer's pose is unknowable today, the gesture likely contributed to the mystique of the artist's otherworldly talent for lifelike representations. The image is also a memento mori, given the inevitable fate of the human son of God at age thirty-three. *Me as Dürer* is the first of Wearing's *Spiritual Family* self-portraits to be based on a painting rather than a photograph, much less one of a Renaissance artist. It is also the initial figure to appear in living color, which here brings out the uncanny similarity between Dürer's painted and Wearing's photographed hazel eyes.

In 2018 Wearing embarked on a new group of *Spiritual Family* self-portraits as iconic women artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, starting with Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986) and continuing on to Eva Hesse, Meret Oppenheim, and Julia Margaret Cameron. In *Me as O’Keeffe* the American painter is a commanding androgynous presence. She seems especially lifelike and contemporary in her simple, white button-up shirt, sleeves rolled, and with hands in pockets, though the black-and-white format links Wearing’s image to the history of modernist photography. O’Keeffe’s pose and the moody clouds in the background quote the photographs of Alfred Stieglitz, O’Keeffe’s partner in life and art. The rolling hills and leafy sprigs in Wearing’s rendition obliquely recall O’Keeffe’s paintings grounded in nature. Through this layering of antecedents, *Me as O’Keeffe* visualizes the collaborative process that resulted in Stieglitz’s striking portraits of O’Keeffe, as well as in Wearing’s image.

In *Me as Eva Hesse* the American sculptor's face is loosely framed by a square opening in the netted rope she is holding up, as she seemingly adjusts one of her Post-Minimalist sculptures. This self-portrait as Hesse (1936–1970) is the first in Wearing's *Spiritual Family* series to feature an artist primarily known for making three-dimensional work, as well as a rare color photograph, which accentuates the two artists' uncanny physical resemblance.

By the time Wearing created *Me as Eva Hesse*, sculpture had become an increasingly important part of her own practice, having begun, in 2008, to make commemorative statues of families and everyday heroes, many of them women. Wearing's homage here seems based more on her admiration for Hesse's expressive corporeal abstraction than any formal similarities between their oeuvres. Yet by framing Hesse with hemp cord, Wearing constructs a metaphor for the circular reading of an artist's work through her identity, and her identity through her work.

In *Me as Meret Oppenheim* the mirror reflection of Wearing as the Swiss Surrealist artist (1913–1985) is fractured into a polymorphic vision of self. Best known for her canonical *Object* (1936), a fur-lined teacup, saucer, and spoon, Oppenheim was also a model and muse for Man Ray, a modernist photographer who recorded Marcel Duchamp's performances as his feminine alter ego, Rose Sélavy. While Wearing's long-standing love for Surrealism would naturally draw her to Oppenheim's work in painting and sculpture, her masked self-portrait of the artist, with its enigmatic image and monochrome tonality, invokes the history of Surrealist photography. However, *Me as Meret Oppenheim* does not re-create an existing image but rather imagines the results of a collaboration between Oppenheim and Man Ray mediated by Wearing.

In *Me as Julia Margaret Cameron and Two Muses*, Wearing has composed an allegorical tableau much like those the British photographer (1815–1879) organized with favorite servants and family members as subjects. As Cameron, Wearing is masked and seated in flowing robes, a formidable goddess of photography accompanied by twin wreathed muses in white gowns, both embodied by Wearing unmasked. However, Wearing's naked face is no more revealing of her "true" self; as the muses she is simply masked in a different way. She is portraying someone in Cameron's milieu pretending to be a muse.

Me as Julia Margaret Cameron and Two Muses is an allegory of self-portraiture, which is characterized by the artist's mirror roles as both the object of the image and its producer. Using digital interventions Wearing began to incorporate into the *Spiritual Family* self-portraits in 2018, she here creates not only identical twin muses but also metaphorically mirrors herself as artist in the reflection of herself as muse.


For over thirty years, British conceptual artist Gillian Wearing (b. 1963) has explored the tensions between self and society in an increasingly media-saturated world. *Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks* gathers over one hundred photographs, videos, paintings, and sculptures that examine how people establish a sense of self within familial, social, and historical contexts, especially in the aftermath of trauma. Focused equally on self-portraiture and on conveying the stories of others, Wearing's art interrogates documentary traditions while evoking the culture of social media. Masks appear both as literal props and as metaphors for the daily performances each of us stage as individuals. Profoundly empathetic and psychologically intense, her work questions fixed notions of identity and tests the boundaries between the private and public.

This gallery presents Wearing's self-portraits as various versions of herself. In her series *Family Album* (2003–06) and *Spiritual Family* (2008–), Wearing introduced self-portraits in which she is masked as other people. But even in the more conventional early self-portraits displayed here, she rarely appears in a straightforward, unmediated way, reinforcing the idea that one's identity is determined by circumstances of time and place. In 2000 Wearing photographed herself in a mask based on a cast of her own face at that time, and in the last decade she has systematically created an archive of self-portraits in which she is masked as herself as she appears in images from different stages in her life. For the wallpaper in this gallery, she generated speculative self-portraits that predict how she might look in 2034, when she turns seventy.

In addition to the masks and wigs that she often wears in her self-portraits, Wearing has, in recent years, also used digital means to assist in her disguises. Her role in the production process of these images resembles that of a director instructing a film crew: whether the final product is a video or photograph, she outsources the realization of components of her work, from sets and costumes to lighting and cinematography. Wearing has also invited others to create their own realistic portraits of her. She asked a street artist to depict her, commissioned a painter to airbrush a fantasy self-portrait, hired a fortune-teller to read her palm, and cast actors to play her in a deep-fake advertisement for herself, thereby exposing the processes of interpretation that form our assessments of each other.

Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks is organized by Jennifer Blessing, Senior Curator, Photography, and Nat Trotman, Curator, Performance and Media, with X Zhu-Nowell, Assistant Curator, and Ksenia Soboleva, Marica and Jan Vilcek Curatorial Fellow.

The exhibition continues on Tower Levels 2, 4, and 5, and in the New Media Theater.

To learn more about the exhibition, download the Guggenheim Digital Guide, available for free on the Bloomberg Connects app. Look for this icon 

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#GillianWearing

Lockdown

Though conceived shortly before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Wearing's *Lockdown* series (2020) was created in its midst. Composed of painted self-portraits—the artist's first paintings in more than thirty years—this body of work captures the turn toward introspection endemic to forced isolation.

Wearing rarely appears unmasked in her photographic self-portraits, and typically employs numerous technicians to assist her. For her *Lockdown* series she instead worked alone, painting first in diaphanous watercolor, later in more solidly rendered oil. While the paintings document her likeness, Wearing's hand in the execution of the compositions suggests a sincere sensibility. But as in her hyperrealistic photographs and sculptures, where layered puns and metaphors point to the works' artifice, there is more at play in *Lockdown*. It gradually becomes apparent from Wearing's poses that at least some of the paintings were based on staged photographs rather than her mirror image. And as she conveys various moods and affects through her palette and facial expressions, she may very well be acting, much like in her films, where emotional recall is used to produce deeply felt performances.

Ultimately, the *Lockdown* paintings are *vanitas* images, celebrating the moment while acknowledging life's precarity. Made during the same period as the *Lockdown* works, *Mask Masked* (2020) is an iteration of a 2013 wax sculpture of Wearing's face in the form of a mask, now equipped with a blue surgical covering. The sculpture's presence in this gallery invites viewers to see the *Lockdown* paintings through our current experience. If these paintings are selfies, they remind us that self-representation was urgent before COVID, and it will remain so after.

In the late 1980s, when Wearing started making Polaroids of herself, she was in art school and the photographs served as a sort of visual diary—a way to try on looks and moods and identities, and see how she liked them, as the director of her own image. They were a tool of self-creation through the quotidian masquerade of makeup, wigs, and costume. In 2016 Wearing gathered some of these personal Polaroid snaps dating from 1988 to 2005—essentially up until the demise of the photographic technology with the arrival of cell phone cameras. Presented in a vitrine as relics of a bygone era, *My Polaroid Years* has prophetic resonance with today's selfie culture.

Me as an Artist in 1984 is part of an ongoing series of self-portraits that Wearing makes at different stages in her life, often by re-creating old photographs and donning masks of herself at a younger age. *Me as an Artist in 1984* is based on a snapshot of Wearing seated in a corner of her London apartment. At the time the snapshot was taken, Wearing would have been twenty years old and not yet determined to be an artist; she made this work thirty years later, in her fiftieth year, at a moment when she could look back at the photo and reflect on the roots of her practice. The presence of the small figures and painted green mask suggests that Wearing is reclaiming her identity as a sculptor with this photograph: she produced her first self-portrait sculpture, *Me as Mask* (2013), in the year prior to making it.

In the conceptual triptych *Rock 'n' Roll 70*, Wearing anticipates aging twenty years. Housed in a bright yellow frame, the work includes two photographic self-portraits, one taken by Wearing when the piece was made, at age fifty, and the other an imagined version of the artist at seventy. A third, empty matboard window is labeled “Me at 70, 2034” and will contain a future portrait, to be inserted when the time comes.

Rock 'n' Roll 70 is often displayed mounted on a wallpaper backdrop of the same name, tiled with a repeating grid of fifteen photographic fantasy self-portraits of Wearing at seventy. She collaborated with forensic and age-progression artists to create these predictive renderings of the kind used by law enforcement for long-term missing persons. She also used analogue techniques for the stylistically varied self-portraits—some look like ID headshots, others like studio portraits or snapshots. Any could be slotted into the framed photograph’s second window.

Wearing, Gillian is a synthesis of the artist's explorations to date of the masquerade of identity and selfhood. Like much of Wearing's work, it is recursive—it includes references to earlier pieces as well as performances within performances and masks worn over masks. The title is suggestive of an archival file documenting the artist's multiple and variable selves.

Produced in collaboration with the global advertising agency Wieden + Kennedy and scripted around a seemingly candid statement of her artistic purpose, *Wearing, Gillian* takes the form of a promotional piece about Wearing herself. To create the work, the artist placed an online casting call for actors to portray her in a short film. A troupe of more than fifteen people appears in the resulting 5-minute video, their faces, bodies, and voices digitally morphed with the artist's and each other's to create myriad hybrid versions of a deepfake persona.

In this recent work Wearing expands on her *Lockdown* self-portraits by inserting herself into an 1877 painting by the French artist Henri Fantin-Latour (1836–1904) titled *La Lecture* (*The Reading*). The original painting depicts two women in a domestic setting, one of whom reads aloud from a book while the other sits beside her, listening. In her version, Wearing takes the place of the listener but crops the image, shifting the focus from the act of reading to the relationship between the two figures. As in the *Spiritual Family* photographs on view in Tower Level 5, Wearing assumes the identity of a historical figure, but here she plays the role of a subject rather than an artist. Carefully studying her female companion, she imagines herself in a time and place that limited women's social lives to private spaces—not unlike those featured in *Lockdown*.

GILLIAN WEARING

WEARING MASKS

For over thirty years, British conceptual artist Gillian Wearing (b. 1963) has explored the tensions between self and society in an increasingly media-saturated world. *Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks* gathers over one hundred photographs, videos, paintings, and sculptures that examine how people establish a sense of self within familial, social, and historical contexts, especially in the aftermath of trauma. Focused equally on self-portraiture and on conveying the stories of others, Wearing's art interrogates documentary traditions while evoking the culture of social media. Masks appear both as literal props and as metaphors for the daily performances each of us stage as individuals. Profoundly empathetic and psychologically intense, her work questions fixed notions of identity and tests the boundaries between the private and public.

Wearing has long been fascinated by the ways film and television can conjure worlds that, while completely fabricated, still carry real emotional weight. Over the years she has explored this paradox in numerous video installations, working with trained actors and, increasingly, with Hollywood-style film crews to test the boundaries between acted and actual reality. She has also ventured into cinema and documentary television, releasing her first feature-length film, *Self Made*, in 2010, and a BBC program, *Everything Is Connected: George Eliot's Life*, in 2019.

As part of the exhibition, Wearing's short film *We Are Here* (2014) screens weekly in the New Media Theater. Wearing made this piece in the West Midlands of England, where she grew up, working in locations that were of personal significance to her and with local residents, who deliver short monologues recounting their regrets, losses, and guilt. But echoing the literary device from Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), here each figure speaks a script written as though they had come back from the dead. Indeed, the film seems to exist outside of time, and when all the participants gather in a youth club that Wearing frequented as a teenager, their zombie-like refrain leaves viewers with a resounding sense of mournful reflection on the many-sided personal lives of the strangers who surround us, like ghosts in the machine.

We Are Here screens continuously every Saturday from noon to 5 pm.

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