

Press Release

Amos Gitai

War Requiem

21 March—11 May 2024
Opening Thursday 21 March 2024, 6—8 pm

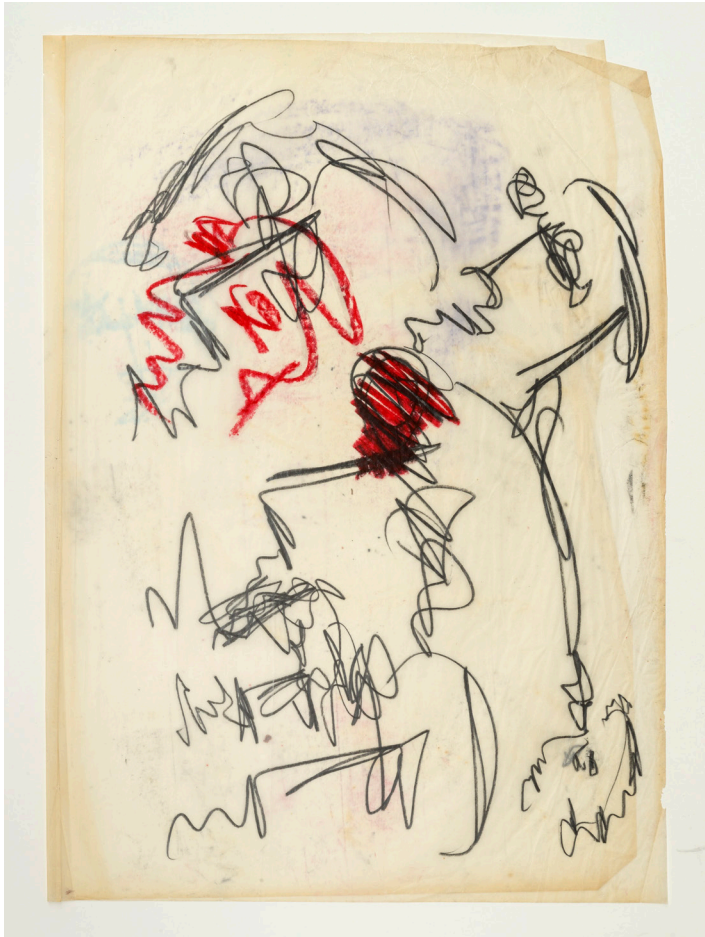
Thaddaeus Ropac
Salzburg Villa Kast
Mirabellplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg



Amos Gitai, *War Requiem 5*, 1973.
Graphite, pencil, pastel on paper. 70 x 50 cm (27.56 x 19.69 in)

The exhibition presents a series of pastel drawings and ceramic works by Israeli artist and filmmaker Amos Gitai. The works on view were publicly exhibited for the first time in 2023 as part of an installation at the Centre Pompidou in Paris and have since been on view at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

As a young man, Gitai experienced the Yom Kippur War of 1973 as part of an airborne rescue team, evacuating wounded soldiers from the Golan battlefields. On the sixth day of the war – Gitai's 23rd birthday – a missile hit their helicopter during a rescue flight into Syrian territory, killing their co-pilot and wounding Gitai. 'I was born and almost killed on the same day, and roughly at the same hour,' the



Amos Gitai, *War Requiem 9*, 1973. Graphite and pastel on paper.
70 x 51 cm (27.56 x 20.08 in)

artist has stated. This defining and violently traumatic event changed the course of his life, leading him to filmmaking after 'recording what I saw from the helicopter: faces, the texture of the earth, bits of rescue missions' with his Super-8 camera. Since then, the experience of this violent rupture continually recurs in Gitai's internationally acclaimed films, documentaries and artworks, always striving for a future marked by peace and reconciliation.

The works on view in this exhibition capture the artist's reflection on the elusiveness of memory, the chaos of war, and its impact on those who participate in it. Titled after Benjamin Britten's 1962 eponymous musical composition memorialising war casualties, the pastel drawings on view in Salzburg show expressive portraits in varying hues of bold colours. Drawn either on blank drawing paper or on newspapers from 1973 that include death notices, they show Gitai's first intuitive expressions in the aftermath of

the war. The artist found himself drawing faces obsessively, in an effort to document and process his trauma and the losses he suffered.

His recent series of ceramic works were created exactly 50 years later and echo the haunting portraits on paper. They represent a continuation of the graphic work, featuring meticulously crafted faces rendered in colourful glazes, from bold primary hues to subtle gradients. Together with the drawings on view in the exhibition, the *War Requiem* series stands as a poignant reminder of the human cost of war.

The exhibition in Salzburg will coincide with the opening of Gitai's film retrospective at the Austrian Film Museum in the Albertina on 2 May 2024 with *Shikun* (2024) and the presentation of *Yitzhak Rabin: Chronicle of an Assassination* at the Burgtheater on 4 and 5 May 2024.



Amos Gitai, *War Requiem 2*, 1973. Pastel on paper.
70 x 49 cm (27.56 x 19.29 in)



Amos Gitai

About the artist

Amos Gitai is an Israeli filmmaker internationally known for his documentaries and feature films about the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and personal and collective memory. Born in Haifa, Israel, in 1950, he is the son of the Bauhaus-trained Polish architect Munio Weinraub Gitai, who fled the Nazi regime in Germany, where he was working in 1933, and the Israeli intellectual and activist, Efratia Margalit, a non-religious expert on biblical texts. He has drawn on biographical, familial and generational themes throughout his practice, as well as the trauma of war and the celebration of life in the face of adversity.

Gitai's first feature-length documentaries *House* (1980) and *Field Diary* (1982) were rejected by the Israeli television commissioner. At odds with the authorities in his country, he settled in Paris, where he shot several fictional and documentary films, including *Esther* (1985), *Berlin-Jerusalem* (1989) and *Golem, the Spirit of Exile* (1991). A passionate advocate for peace between Israel and Palestine, Gitai further explores the role of memory in his stage productions, which combine film, music and

acting. His performance *Yitzhak Rabin: Chronicle of an Assassination Foretold* (Festival d'Avignon, 2016) notably investigates the death of Yitzhak Rabin, a key figure in the Oslo Accords who was assassinated in 1995. His photographic works, which capture the emotional intensity of a single moment, represent an improvised autobiography that, with hindsight, bears testimony to a shared reality.

Gitai has received numerous awards for his work, including the Robert Bresson Prize at the Venice International Film Festival (2013), a Leopard of Honour at the Locarno International Film Festival (2008) and the Roberto Rossellini Prize at the Cannes Film Festival (2005). Since 1999, several of his films have been entered in the Cannes Film Festival for the Palme d'Or, as well as at the Venice International Film Festival. Exhibitions and performances have been presented at numerous institutions worldwide, including most recently, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (until February 2024); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2023); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2020); and the Philharmonie de Paris (2018).

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