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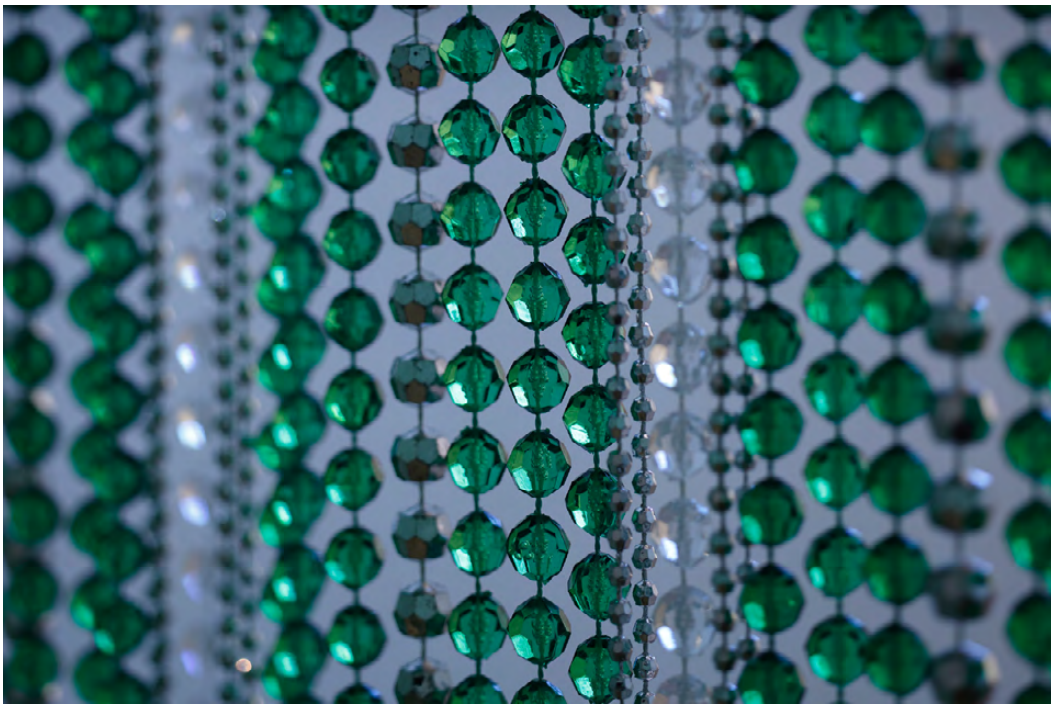
Gagosian Beverly Hills to Present a Contemplative Exhibition about Despair and Hope Curated by Francesco Bonami

Featuring Four Key Works by Maurizio Cattelan, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Richard Prince, and Rudolf Stingel

***Beginning* Opens on April 23, 2022**



Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Beginning)*, 1994, strands of beads and hanging device, dimensions vary with installation
© Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation. Photo: Kioku Keizo

The exhibition is about walking, crossing, looking, sleeping, fearing, and dying, but it also reminds us that every time we walk, cross, look, sleep, fear, or die, we have the chance to begin again.
—Francesco Bonami

BEVERLY HILLS, April 14, 2022—Gagosian is pleased to present *Beginning*, an exhibition of painting, installation, and photography by Maurizio Cattelan, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Richard Prince, and Rudolf Stingel, curated by Francesco Bonami.

Juxtaposing four key contemporary works in a spare, contemplative arrangement inspired by a 1994 exhibition of Gonzalez-Torres's and Stingel's work at the Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria, *Beginning* considers the impact of recent traumatic world events on our collective perception of art and culture. Reflecting a pervasive sense of mourning—and, crucially, a resilient spirit of hope—in the face of death and disaster, it invites quiet, sustained meditation on the often painful process of transition from one state of being to another.

In Cattelan's mural *Father* (2021), a colossal black-and-white representation of the artist's bare feet looms over the gallery interior. Its title alludes to the artist's complex relationship with his own

parent, while the image recalls Andrea Mantegna's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (c. 1483)—as well as widely circulated images of the feet of executed guerilla leader Che Guevara. It also harks back to Cattelan's *Daddy, Daddy* (2008), a sculpture of the hero of Walt Disney's *Pinocchio* (1940) that was first installed facedown in the fountain at the base of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's rotunda as part of the exhibition *theanyspacewhatever* (2008–09) as if having fallen to his death, any filial cry for help having gone unheeded. *Father* conveys Hamlet's ultimate dilemma—"to die, to sleep"—a choice between the avoidance of violent reality and the risk of succumbing to it.

In *Spiritual America 4* (2005), Prince, too, focuses on the meaning and power of a specific body, examining ideas of context and complicity. The suggestive photograph of a forty-year-old Brooke Shields is a direct response to the artist's 1983 artwork *Spiritual America.* Where the earlier work appropriated a photograph by Gary Gross of Shields taken when she was ten years old—which the actress and her mother later sued to suppress—the image featured in *Beginning* was taken by Prince later in Shields's life with her engaged participation. *Spiritual America*'s explicit display of a sexualized preadolescent body questions society's acceptance of such imagery; as writer and curator Rosetta Brooks observes, when the work was first exhibited, it forced viewers to "overstep the normal threshold of indifference (the gallery), denying us the objectivity we are usually allowed to adopt." *Spiritual America 4* builds on the complex legacy of its predecessor, revealing how our cowardice as a society pushes us to look the other way—and that looking without acting or reacting makes us complicit in the crimes of history.

The two works of installation in *Beginning* reconfigure our experience of the gallery space, adopting familiar physical structures to establish a resonant metaphorical realm. Rudolf Stingel has been making works with carpet since a 1991 exhibition at Daniel Newburg Gallery, New York, for which he covered the floor in a wall-to-wall bright orange variant. "Passersby could see the glow from the street," recalls Bonami. "It was about hope and despair. It was radical." Stingel's carpet for Beverly Hills is—as it was in the Graz exhibition—a dense black, lending the project a more somber cast.

The beaded curtain of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *"Untitled" (Beginning)* (1994) has a similarly transformative effect on our passage through the room, and a comparable sense of poetic gravitas. Gonzalez-Torres's beaded curtain works are installed in a natural passageway or across the full span of a site, thus ensuring that individuals must pass through the curtain if they wish to move through the space. The contact that visitors make with the shimmering cascade of green and silver may allude to the fear of bodily touch that accompanied the early years of the AIDS crisis, just as it may suggest similar anxieties ushered in by the COVID-19 pandemic. The work's form also marks out a quasi-mystical portal, inviting us to step from a familiar, shared space into an unknown realm—one potentially fraught with danger, but which also extends the vital promise of a fresh start.

Francesco Bonami is artistic director of By Art Matters, Hangzhou, China, which is housed in a building designed by Renzo Piano. He has curated more than one hundred exhibitions, including the 50th Biennale di Venezia (2003) and the Whitney Biennial (2010). He writes for *Il Foglio* and *Vanity Fair Italia*, and his recent books include *Post: L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità sociale* (Feltrinelli, 2019). He hosts a podcast on Artefatti and can be followed on Instagram at @thebonamist.

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BEGINNING
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Press

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