

Peter Beard Solo Show Opens Guild Hall Museum's Summer Season

April 8, 2016

by Pat Rogers

[Guild Hall](#) announced a solo show by artist, author and photographer [Peter Beard](#) will open its summer exhibition season. "Peter Beard: Last Word From Paradise" will be exhibited from June 18 to July 31, 2016, at Guild Hall Museum. The exhibition will present a rich perspective on Beard's extraordinary life and work both in Africa and on the East End of Long Island.

Representing the artist's first U.S. museum solo exhibition in 15 years, "Peter Beard: Last Word From Paradise" presents more than 50 multi-layered collages, drawings, photographs, and diaries from the 1960s to the present, some on public view for the first time. The show includes the artist's iconic work from Africa that chronicles the change in the landscape from a time richly populated by elephants, rhinos, and crocodiles, to what remains today. Also on view will be never-before exhibited Montauk portraits of his home, family, and friends including [Mick Jagger](#), [Andy Warhol](#), [Jacqueline Onassis](#), and [Lee Radziwill](#).

Divided into two sections installed in separate galleries, the exhibition is organized around the two outposts that Peter Beard calls home - Africa and the East End of Long Island.

"We wanted to present Peter Beard's body of work through a different lens, by exploring the artist's visions of Kenya and Montauk as encampments/refuges where his art and life converge," stated Christina Mossaides Strassfield, Museum Director and Chief Curator of Guild Hall Museum, in the exhibition announcement.



“I’ll Write Whenever I Can...” by Peter Beard, 1965/2004. Gelatin silver print with gelatin silver collage, animal blood, and rag, 50 1/4 x 88 1/4 inches. ©Peter Beard, Courtesy of Peter Beard Studio.

The richly textured and multi-layered works in the exhibition will reveal Beard’s life-long passion as an adventurer, his concern about the environment, and his chronicles of the devastation of the animal population in East Africa. The exhibition highlights include the self-portrait, *I’ll Write Whenever I Can*, 1965/2004, depicting Beard writing in his diary with his lower body submerged inside the fresh corpse of a crocodile.

BEARD’S DIARIES

Since childhood, keeping diaries have been a constant source of artistic inspiration for Peter Beard.

“Life is ever-evolving and with it so is my work. That is one important aspect of doing my diaries—continuous enhancement,” said Beard recently.

Using his diaries as points of departure, Beard’s complex process often involves incorporating newspaper clippings, dried leaves, feathers, insects, old sepia-toned photos, photographs of women, quotes and various found objects in conjunction with his working with ink and paint. The shamanistic quality and visceral nature of his compositions are sometimes further animated by the addition of animal blood, or even his own blood, according to Guild Hall Museum.

A number of Beard’s works depict the death of African wildlife especially his beloved elephants, featured in his groundbreaking book *The End of the Game* (Viking Press, 1965; Taschen, 2015), which chronicled the mass elephant starvation and destruction of the ecosystem in Kenya’s Tsavo National Park.

“When I first went to Kenya in August 1955, I could never have guessed what was going to happen. Kenya’s population was roughly five million, with about 100 tribes scattered throughout... it was

authentic, unspoiled, teeming with big game – so enormous it appeared inexhaustible. Now Kenya’s population of 30 million drains the country’s limited and diminishing resources at an amazing rate: surrounding, isolating, and relentlessly pressuring the last pockets of wildlife in denatured Africa,” Beard wrote in the 1990s.

HAMPTONS CONNECTION

In 1974, Beard bought property near the Church Estate, which was owned by Andy Warhol and [Paul Morissey](#), in Montauk, Long Island. Beard’s captivating persona together with the stunning cliffside, beachfront dwelling, drew the Studio 54 crowd. During stays in Montauk, Beard photographed a number of luminaries and friends including Andy Warhol, [Truman Capote](#), the Rolling Stones, Lee Radziwill, and Jacqueline Onassis, whose portraits are included in the exhibition. Then and now Beard applies the same commitment to conservation issues and land preservation in Montauk. His efforts are documented in a series of prints depicting the cliff erosion and preservation efforts deployed to preserve his beloved Montauk bluff.

A devastating fire in 1977 destroyed the main house of Beard’s Montauk property including years of journals along with works by [Picasso](#), Warhol, and [Bacon](#). “When I got the news, I knew that you could either get into self-pitying mode or not, and I picked the later,” Beard said.

BASIC FACTS: “Peter Beard: Last Word From Paradise” will be on view from June 18 to July 31, 2016 at Guild Hall Museum. Guild Hall is located at 158 Main Street, East Hampton, NY 11937. www.guildhall.org.

Copyright 2016 Hamptons Art Hub LLC. All rights reserved.