

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

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THE ESTATE OF GENERAL IDEA: Ziggurat

534 W. 26th Street

New York, NY 10001, USA

Thursday, November 30, 2017–Saturday, January 13, 2018

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 30, 2017, 6 p.m.–8 p.m.



Mitchell-Innes & Nash is pleased to announce the gallery's first exhibition with the **Estate of General Idea** (1969-1994) titled Ziggurat. The exhibition will be on view in our Chelsea gallery from November 30, 2017 through January 13, 2018 and will feature approximately seven ziggurat paintings alongside works on paper, photographs and ephemera that expand upon the significance of the ziggurat form in the oeuvre of General Idea. Ziggurat marks General Idea's first solo exhibition in New York since The Museum of Modern Art presented One Day of AZT / One Year of AZT (1991) in Projects 56: General Idea (1996-97). The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an interview between AA Bronson and Hans Ulrich Obrist. Please join us for an opening reception on Thursday, November 30 from 6 to 8 pm.

Formed in Toronto in 1969 by AA Bronson, Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal, General Idea is internationally recognized for work that tackled such subjects as the myth of the artist, the role of mass media, the relationship between the body

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and identity, issues of gender and sexual representation, and famously HIV/AIDS activism at a time when talking about the disease was taboo. The members of General Idea were key figures in the 1970's-80's conceptual art scenes and, with equal parts humor and criticality, created work across a variety of media and platforms. In performances, editions, videos, publications such as their seminal FILE Magazine, sculptures, paintings and installations, the group often occupied unconventional forms of presentation such as beauty pageants, picture magazines, television talk shows, pop-up shops, and various advertising formats.

The importance of the ziggurat to General Idea's practice cannot be understated. It is a central and repeated symbol in General Idea's vocabulary, appearing (either implicitly or explicitly) in paintings, drawings, performances, photographs, sculptures, prints, videos and costumes spanning the group's existence. An ancient Mesopotamian architectural structure of steps leading up to a temple, the ziggurat symbolizes as a link between humans and the gods. The symbol can be found in cultures ranging from Mesopotamia to the Aztec to Navajo Nation. General Idea appropriates this symbol of power and theism, utilizing the form as a framing device to examine questions of branding, architecture and spatial politics.

In an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, AA Bronson explains the group's initial fascination with the ziggurat form;

"We were brought up in the post-war period, and we were interested in the idea of progress and images of progress. We didn't believe in progress as a concept. We were interested in how it dominated the post-war imagination. If you look at business magazines from the '50s, for example Fortune Magazine, the advertising features a lot of skyscrapers, which are always stepped. This image of the ziggurat always dominates. It is an image of power or even male power [...] the ziggurat came to represent the future, the strength of progress and technological change and the male power of construction."

The ziggurat for General Idea stands, among other things, as an architectural device communicating fame, money, power and success. The culmination of General Idea's architectural pursuits would be The 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion, a fictional structure which purportedly housed The 1984 Miss General Idea Pageant. The Pavillion, as the story goes, burned down in 1984, leaving just a bare ziggurat-shaped foundation of the actual-size floor plan of The Pavillion's audience seating area.

Felix Partz created the first series of Ziggurat paintings in 1968-69 before the inception of the General Idea group-identity and they were later absorbed into the General Idea oeuvre. In 1986, General Idea returned to ziggurat paintings, carrying out sketches from 1968-69 that had never been completed. The later paintings are four-inches deep, which corresponds to the height of each step on the ziggurats depicted, creating a strong object-quality. Several architectural drawings on view in the exhibition situate the ziggurat form within imagined space. Silver gelatin prints depict the VB Gown (1975), Miss General Idea's venetian blind dress that incorporates a ziggurat pattern and for General Idea

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represents an architectural massing study for The 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion.

About The Estate of General Idea (1969–1994)

AA Bronson, born Michael Tims, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, 1946.

Felix Partz, born Ronald Gabe, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 1945-1994.

Jorge Zontal, born Slobodan Saia-Levy, Parma, Italy, 1944-1994.

General Idea was the subject of three major 2017 museum exhibitions: General Idea: Tiempo Partido / Broken Time, Museo Jumex, Mexico City (2016-17) and Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires/MALBA, Buenos Aires (2017, General Idea Photographs (1969-1982), Musée d'art modern et contemporain/MAMCO, Geneva (2017) and Haute Culture: General Idea. Une rétrospective, 1969- 1994, Musée d'art modern de la Ville de Paris, Paris (2011) and Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2011-12).

General Idea has been the subject of several major traveling museum exhibitions: The 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel; Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal (1984-85). The Armoury of the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; 49th Parallel, New York; University Art Gallery, California State University, Long Beach; Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo; Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (1968-87). General Idea's Fin de siècle, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart; Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, Barcelona; Kunstverein in Hamburg, Hamburg; The Power Plant, Toronto; Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, Ohio State University, Columbus, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, (1992-1993). General Idea Editions: 1967–1995, touring to 11 university and provincial galleries across Canada (2003-2005); and then non-edition works added by the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh (2005); München Kunstverein, Munich; and KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2006); then re-titled as General Idea: Found Formats, Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich (2006-2007), Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville (2007). The tour concluded at the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2007). Haute Culture: General Idea. Une rétrospective, 1969–1994, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris and Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2011).

Additionally, General Idea has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1979); the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver (1984); Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst (now Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst), Ghent (1984); the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (1997- 98). General Idea has exhibited in the Canadian Pavilion at the 40th Venice Biennale, Venice (1980); the 4th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney (1982); Documenta 7, Kassel (1982); XXIV Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo (1998).

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General Idea's work is included in the collections of institutions worldwide, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; National Gallery of Canada/Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, Ottawa; the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; France's Fonds national d'art contemporain (FNAC); Centre Pompidou (Musée national d'art moderne), Paris; and the Tate, London.