



# JAIME GILI

## THE LAKES

MARCH 8 - APRIL 16

PRIVATE VIEW: MONDAY, MARCH 7

Opened in 1961, *Parque del Este* (*Park of the East*) in Caracas, is a recognised jewel of modernist architecture. Though the design, by Roberto Burle Marx, has over the years been corrupted by modifications and impositions which sit uneasily with the architect's original concept. The nine new canvases and boat sculptures by Venezuelan Jaime Gili take as their compositional starting point an aerial view of the nine lakes set within this unique landscape.

As a young artist growing up in Caracas, Gili witnessed these and various other alterations to the site. The area and its rich history continue to inspire him – he has recently worked on a hypothetical commission for the original site, but still with *Utopia* at its heart.

In 1969, a full-scale replica of *Nao Santa Maria*, the ship that brought Christopher Columbus to America's mainland coast, was placed in one of the lakes by the government of the time. The sight of a galleon-style flagship anchored within this waterland retreat seemed incongruous to the park's many regular visitors.

More recently, the military government of Hugo Chávez, considering the vessel a symbol of colonial power, removed the galleon, and proposed replacing it with *The Leander*, another parody, which is said to have transported the War of Independence leader Francisco de Miranda back to Venezuela.

Gili has always considered the *Park del Este* in its original state a perfectly executed masterpiece, the subsequent changes inflicted on the aesthetics of the place raises questions about public art and landscape; post-colonial politics and propaganda, Modernism and heritage; all within the specific history of the park in question; its shipwrecks, mini-Utopias – and failures.

For the first time the artist has introduced curves into his visual language. Foliate leaves are set against modulating backgrounds. Teardrop and paisley shapes evoke the soft quality of this retreat - the paintings referencing a very specific story of architectural design and the beautiful Lakes and gardens contained therein.

A Rifleman book is published to accompany the exhibition

*The Lakes* is curated by Robin Mann

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