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For immediate release

## TREE OF LIFE: Philippe Friedberger, Françoise Gilot, Andrea Zemel Summer 2013

Curated by Serge Bril Panijel and Adam Brown



Françoise Gilot, *Tree of Life*, 2002. Oil on canvas, 63" x 51". Philippe Friedberger, *Le cerf ailé*, 1958. Tapestry cartoon, gouache on paper, 50" x 75". Andrea Zemel, *Dreamer*, 2011. Glazed ceramic & glass mosaic, 40" x 40" x 2"

ILIAD is pleased to present an exhibition of works by Philippe Friedberger, Françoise Gilot and Andrea Zemel. The Tree of Life is a prominent image in world mythology. Spanning two continents and several decades in their creation, works by the three artists bring together a wide array of references, interpretation, and imagery about the Tree of Life, and perpetual regeneration.

The motif of the "World Tree" appears in many of the shared stories and folk cosmologies central to mankind. The tree is a metaphor for the phenomenal world: with its expansive branches touching the sky, roots penetrating deep in to the earth, and its massive trunk occupying the realm precisely in-between, it emerges as a great paradigm and organizing principle. As the "*axis mundi*", it is the place between heaven and earth, the center where all points of the compass meet. The Tree of Life as the "arena of the world" is the place where the spectacle of life happens, it is the center of the universe understood as the place where each of us stands in witness; a point of assemblage.

The exhibition includes early works by **Philippe Friedberger** from the late 1950s, when he designed a series of tapestries for the Braquenié company in Aubusson, France. These

large-size works, which are the successors of grandiose, narrative medieval tapestries, evoke epic and fantastic stories, connecting personal and collective mythologies. A few of the full-size preparatory cartoons made by Mr. Friedberger in gouache survived and are now brought together in this exhibition.

The Tree of Life as the "arena of the world" returned numerous times in Mr. Friedberger's career. In a series he painted decades later, in the early 2000s, trees appear in his oil paintings as the main theme - as sole characters. With no extremities represented, these trees transform into something rather monumental: white dots, a myriad of stars, suggest a cosmic scene within the outlines of the tree set against a well-discernible background. The tree becomes the universe, and the thick branches carry the weight of the world.

Living and working in New York, **Françoise Gilot** remains a vital presence in the art world, creating a bridge between the School of Paris of the 1940s and 1960s and the contemporary American art scene. Her paintings, drawings, monotypes, and original prints are included in the permanent collections of numerous museums and private collections throughout Europe and the United States. Dedicated to art from an early age and becoming a painter in her late teens, she is also known as the artistic muse of Picasso, his companion for a decade, and is the mother of his children, Claude and Paloma.

In a graceful composition of symmetry and order, Gilot's *Tree of Life* from 2002 evokes hope and the promise of rebirth in the form of a subtly representational tree. The exhibition will also include other oil paintings by Ms. Gilot executed around the same period, and a number of monotypes reflecting on the Tree as a metaphor.

The luminous and allegorical works of **Andrea Zemel** imagine the play of the world in terms of the stories which we choose to tell about ourselves. Her works turn exclusively to the medium of mosaic as a method for creating visual narrative. Evocative of the tradition of illuminated manuscript, they are at once symbolic and decorative, with great concern for craft as a vehicle for content. The image of the "Tree" as the arena of the world is a recurrent touchstone in Zemel's narratives, and as a cosmology, the tale of the "Tree of Life" has its many settings in her work. Where ever motion and movement emerge as a background in her stirring vortices of glass tessera, she makes reference to the numinous presence; the *mysterium tremendum*. It is here that Zemel points to that ever-present and pervasive mystery: the spectacle of life requires an audience.

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