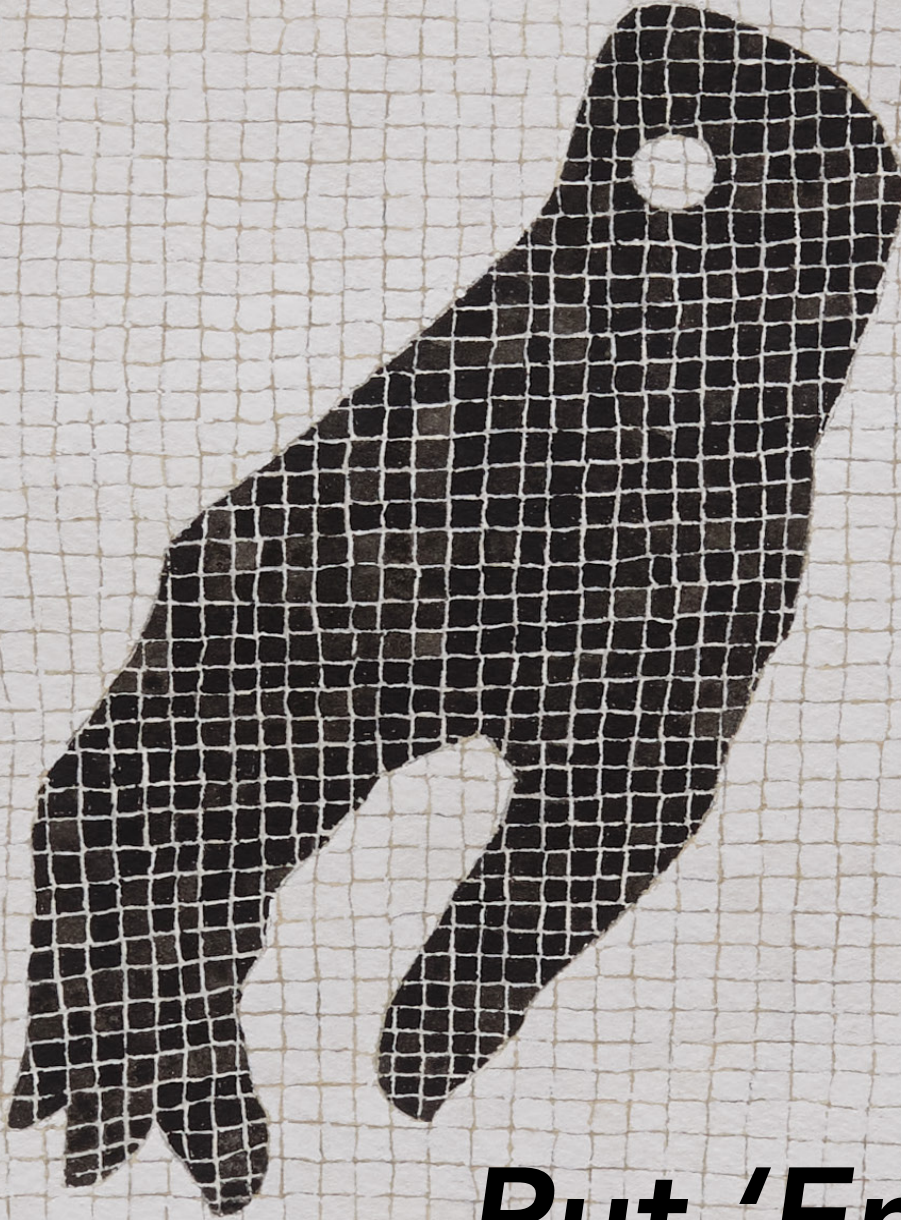


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# ***Put 'Em Up!***

*An exhibition of hands curated by  
Omar Mazhar and Robin Katz*

11th June - 17th July  
Tuesday - Saturday, 11 am - 6 pm

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## Press Release

Of all the parts of the human body, none has compelled artists more persistently, across more cultures and centuries, than the hand. It is at once the most ordinary and the most miraculous of instruments — the site where thought becomes action, where inner life reaches outward and leaves its mark upon the world. To paint or sculpt a hand is, in some sense, to portray the very faculty of making itself.

From the negative stencils preserved at Pech Merle and El Castillo to the modelled gestures of late antique sculpture and the diagrammatic mudrās of Buddhist iconography, the hand has functioned simultaneously as sign and signature. This exhibition assembles works spanning some two millennia, in which the hand is the principal subject of attention.

The hand is rarely only itself: an open palm, a clenched fist, a hand at rest, reaching or holding, conveys information the face has traditionally been asked to supply — hesitation, assurance, tension or composure. The fist has long served as an emblem of defence, of authority and of resistance, from Roman manus to twentieth-century political iconography; the handshake remains a codified social rite, manual rhetoric accompanies spoken language, and signed languages constitute fully grammatical systems articulated through gesture alone. In painting, drawing and sculpture, such gestures are arrested and held, permitting sustained scrutiny of forms ordinarily perceived only in passage.

The exhibition opens with an Egyptian hand-shaped amulet of around 400 AD, a small late-antique object made to be worn against the body for protection. It is shown alongside Qajar alams — hand-shaped processional finials associated with the panja and the Shi'a veneration of the Hand of 'Abbas, in which the open palm operates at once as an apotropaic sign and devotional emblem. Such objects belong to a long tradition of votive and protective hands, of which the surviving fragmentary marble and bronze hands of Roman antiquity are perhaps the most familiar instance, prized and collected by generations of antiquarians from the Renaissance onwards.

A selection of old master drawings registers a different order of attention. Whether anatomical study, devotional motif or preparatory sheet, the drawn hand records an act of sustained observation — the articulation of joints, the play of tendon and shadow. The difficulty of the form was reflected in the economics of portraiture itself: European sitters were routinely charged a higher fee for the inclusion of the hands, a stepped tariff preserved in the studio price-lists of Sir Joshua Reynolds and his contemporaries. These sheets are, among other things, evidence of the artist's own hand at work upon its likeness.

The contemporary works extend this enquiry into the present. Georg Baselitz returns repeatedly to the hand in painting and on paper, subjected to the inversion and disjunction characteristic of his practice since the late 1960s. Richard Long's work bears the direct imprint of the artist's hands, mud lifted from a specific river deposited as both index and signature. Pierre Le Tan's ink drawings treat the hand with the unhurried precision he reserved for the still life. Further works by additional living artists develop the theme in adjacent registers.

## Artists featured

ARIANE HUGHES	EDUARDO CHILLIDA	MARGARET MANN	SEYDOU KEITA
ABRAHAM BLOEMAERT	FATHI HASSAN	ORFEO TAGIURI	SIR STANLEY SPENCER
ALI KAZIM	FRANCESCO FONTEBASSO	PAOLO COLOMBO	SUSAN MCDONALD
ANWAR SHEMZA	GEORG BASELITZ	PARME BARATIER	TALIA GOLCHIN
AUGUSTE RODIN	GORA M'BENGUE	PIERRE LE-TAN	TARKA KINGS
BARRY FLANAGAN	IRAIDA ICAZA	RICHARD LONG	TESFAYE URGESSA
BARBARA HEPWORTH	JOHN STEWART	ROBERTO PLATÈ	TINA WENG
CHRISTABEL MACGREEVY	KAORI TATEBAYASHI	ROMILLY SAUMAREZ SMITH	TONGTONG DENG
CLEMENTINE KEITH ROACH	KOJI ENOKURA	RUAN HOFFMAN	