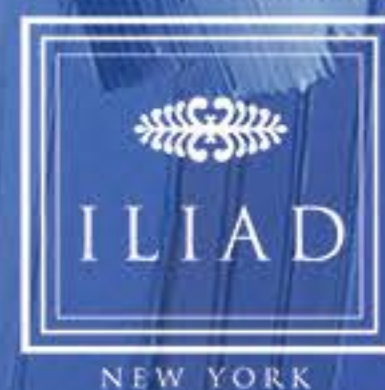


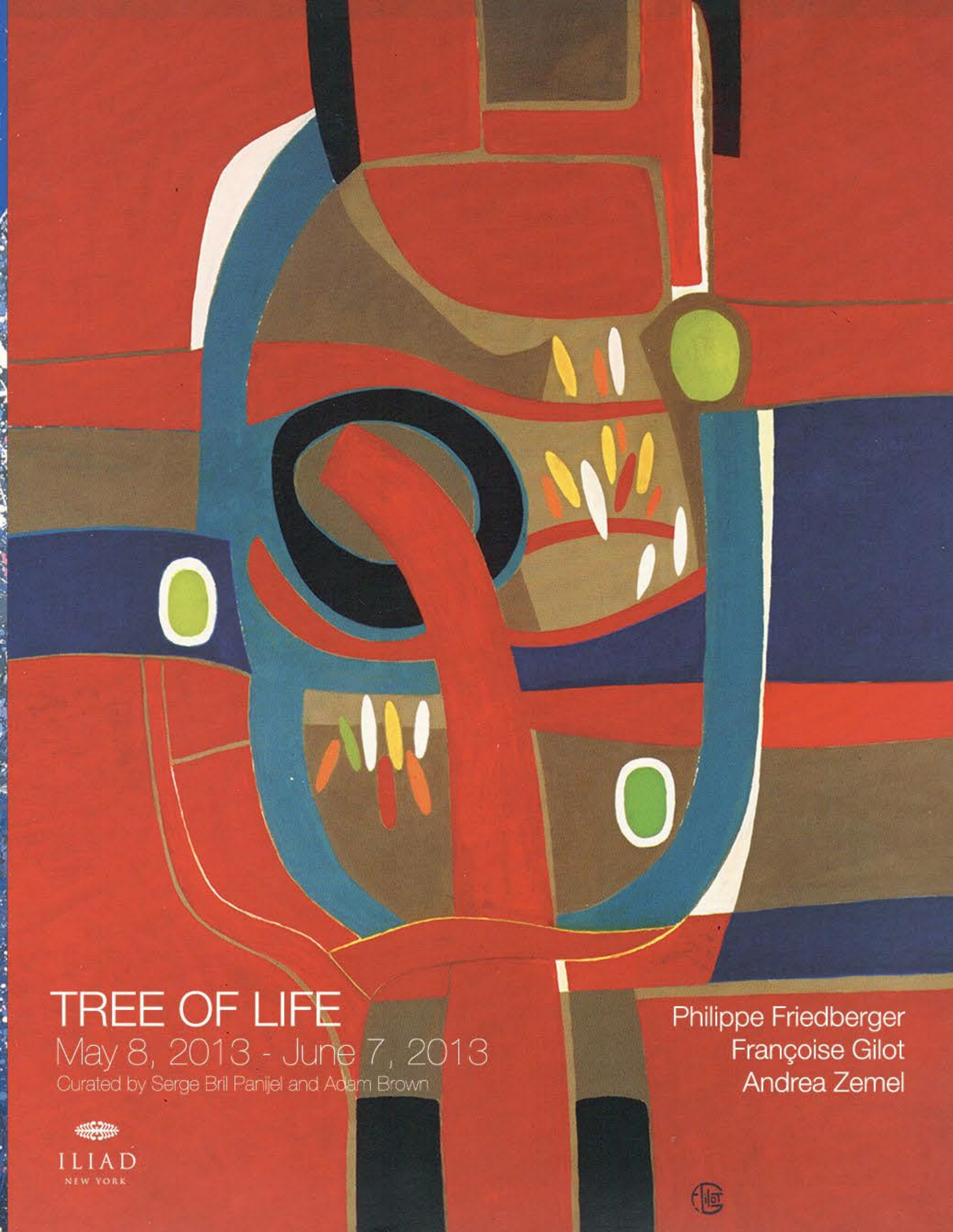


Andrea Zemel
Dreamer, 2010
 Glazed ceramic & glass mosaic
 40" x 40" x 2"

Cover: Françoise Gilot, *Tree of Life*, 2010. Oil on canvas, 26" x 20". Back Cover: Philippe Friedberger, *L'arbre étoilé*, 2001. Oil on canvas, 26" x 32".



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TREE OF LIFE
 May 8, 2013 - June 7, 2013
 Curated by Serge Bri Panjel and Adam Brown



Philippe Friedberger
 Françoise Gilot
 Andrea Zemel



TREE OF LIFE

The motif of "The World Tree" appears in many of the shared mythologies and folk cosmologies central to mankind. It is the tree whose roots reach far underground, "deep under the earth" to subterranean realms, extending to the place of origins and the direction of the past. Its branches reach high to the sky towards heaven, the sun, and the light of day that illuminates. As a metaphor for the *phenomenal world* - couched within the image of the "great tree", with its expansive branches touching the sky, roots penetrating deep into the earth, and its massive trunk occupying the realm precisely *in-between*, the sign of a great paradigm and organizing principle emerges. As the elemental and terrestrial realm, it is a place brimming with animation and movement, replete with the living and with life. 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". As the "naval of the world" - it is the habitation of vegetation, of the "living creatures", and of man.

PHILIPPE FRIEDBERGER

The tree is a favorite theme of Philippe Friedberger and appears almost obsessively in his work. Titles of paintings reveal a wonder and reverence expressed by its image, a homage communicated through the miracle of the seasons. For him, the tree is the axis of the world, the way to pass from the visible to the invisible, from one realm of existence to another. His more recent canvases oscillate without hierarchy or hiatus between figuration and abstraction, and retain a high level of coherence. When changing technique, his style and palette remain the same. Color carries its sensation and relays its emotions. His studies in gouache of the 1950's (designs for Aubusson tapestry) are, in essence, a place of stories - epic and fantastic. They evoke for Friedberger the great Pan, the cosmic thrill, the world of symbols, secret and serene beauty of Gardens of Eden, the mysterious signs, the four elements, and the eternal return of the seasons. "Tree of Life" represents the idea of cosmos living in perpetual regeneration. Through a palette of solid primaries, color symbolizes the movements of life as it connects the three levels of the cosmos: the chthonic world by its roots, the surface of the earth by the trunk that rises from the ground, the sky by the deployment of its branches. As nature's columnar temple and refuge for the aerial creatures, sometimes we hear the nocturnal song of a nightingale and the rustle of wings through its leaves - the tree stretches to the heavens to become a bird, birds perching on the branches become living foliage - a perfect fusion of plant and animal. In places like these, Friedberger's decorative elements become integrated into an architecture - the skin of his whole sense of being, committed without mask to the paths of the creation.



FRANÇOISE GILOT

"Whether under the control of my will or not, when my abstract compositions reach a certain stage of completion they take on a symbolic meaning. ... Mystery and symbols are good partners. ... Time in and time out I pursue my utopia of the Greek Myths. It allows me to confront my inner anxieties with some joy. The archetypes of these conflicts have been examined, rehearsed, played over and over again for millennia to thwart the ill-omened fates and to perceive the all elusive door of hope while waiting for the opportune moment to conjugate the impossible with the highly probable. History teaches lessons, but legends feed the species. They transcend all to reveal the primal truth, the only one that lasts. More than what they do, they help us discover who we are." (Françoise Gilot: Monograph 1940-2000. Acatos, 2000)

ANDREA ZEMEL

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. Drawn to the timeless quality of material so evidently made by hand, 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. In Zemel's contemporary mythologies, a heritage shared is cultural currency. Such as the case, the image of the "Tree" as *the arena of the world* becomes a recurrent touchstone in Zemel's narratives. As a cosmology, the tale of the "Tree of Life" has its many settings, as numerous as the peoples — as variety in the world. What remains incarnate in each however, despite all its variety, is a structure — a resident cast of characters, and perhaps most conspicuous, its attendant guardian. For her, the Ouroboros, the serpent that swallows its own tail, is the sign denoting both "self-reference" and the "continuum of time", as if each were one and the same. Likewise, where ever motion and movement emerge as a background in her stirring vortices of glass tessera, there she makes reference to the numinous presence; to the onlooker, the observer, the *Watcher*. It is here that Zemel points to that ever-present and pervasive mystery; *the spectacle of life requires an audience*.

Philippe Friedberger
Le cerf ailé, 1958
Gouache
50" x 75"