

Galerie Francesca Pia

Gili Tal

You May See Butterflies: Elephant Park

Opening Tuesday, June 6, 5–8 pm

June 7 – July 22, 2023

Thirty feet up, the trees and shrubs they retained from the estate shade a large wooden platform area. Mainly for viewing but also for strolling, learning or relaxing, it is held in place by nothing more than some cleverly placed wedges. It's as close as you'll get to floating, he quips. Due to the diagonal pattern of the slats forming it, and their hues, from certain angles the platform's horizon line disappears and the sounds of the city below, groaning under the weight of various machines still ploughing through its thick fog, in spite of everything, recedes to a hushed vapour. An endless patio. He beckons me over to the ceramic bird bath nestled in the North-West corner. We are building a verdant, idealistic playground, he says, before explaining that whilst combining living and retail in a really quite singular way, the park is a predominantly green space designed with biodiversity at its very core. Mature trees and new, open spaces connected by tree-lined streets will make this London's new green heart. It will attract a plethora of different wildlife. We continue to the old water tower, which is not yet complete but the elements are there. Foliage rising through a trellised exterior in a vertical forest, topped off with a giant burr of wild walnut that will eventually become a naturalistic scatter of multi-purpose bollards-cum-cubes. There will be spaces for everyone. I follow him through the plate-glass doors still marked with blue tape and now there is art everywhere. Underfoot is an exquisite carpet of beetles, ants and dragonflies. Specially commissioned, it represents both the lost forest and the state of politics. I order a burger and it's as good as I've ever tasted. I took on young guys, he tells me, drifting momentarily into his past life. I told them to create things that create data and I would give them a percentage. I basically created a machine that was duplicating money infinitely and for free. It was like copy and paste. Then, at my wife's thirtieth birthday party, she asked me if I was ever going to change. We can see the facade of the arts hub now. An immersive digital space that will only talk about representative nature. Later, I explore muddy corridors that come 2026 will house a retail vertical. A shopping mall, he quickly elucidates. It will combine storied names in global hospitality, architecture and commerce with thoughtfully designed public spaces and a range of amenities. Located in the heart of London, it will be a bustling hive of activity with its own unique identity, people and sounds, as well as containing twelve new restaurants, at least four of which will cleave as closely to "permaculture", a land management system that follows natural ecosystems, as they can. We were served our coffee and the conversation turned to X, the fictional representative of the elite who is referred to endlessly throughout the development. It was not designed like a park, it was designed like literature.

– Gili Tal

This exhibition runs parallel to Gili Tal's *You May See Butterflies: Elephant Springs* at Galerie Buchholz, New York, on view until July 15, and *You May See Butterflies: Castle Square at Jenny's*, New York, on view until July 1, 2023.