



THE GALLERY OF **EVERYTHING** PRESENTS

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL MISSION OF SISTER GERTRUDE MORGAN



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I am a missionary of Christ before I'm an artist.

Sister Gertrude Morgan (1973)

Photographed by Lee Friedlander, lionised by Andy Warhol, re-mixed by King Britt, the remarkable **Sister Gertrude Morgan** (née Gertrude Williams) was a rare and rarified figure in the aesthetic history of 20th century America: a confident female artist, whose visceral image-making went hand-in-hand with the saving of souls.

Born in 1900 in Lafayette, Alabama, **Morgan** was as modest as she was larger-than-life. Her New Orleans Gospel Mission was a spiritual home for believers and non-believers alike. For it was here that she proselytised and painted and rattled her tambourine, when she was not out singing, preaching and teaching Bible to neighbourhood strays.

These moments became the content of her legend. **Morgan** depicted the everyday alongside the divine, outputting her pictorial rhetoric onto any surface she could find. Scraps of card, window blinds, paper fans and serving trays carried her repertoire. They evoked a biographical other-worldly hybrid, where New Jerusalem resembled New Orleans, and where the good Sister's marriage to Jesus, God or both, swirled among the heavenly bodies and elliptical texts.

Although the Black Arts Movement was peaking on the East Coast of America, **Morgan** remained remote from their community, separated by not only by geographical distance, but also by artistic intent. She was a local Louisiana hero, even a star: a stout, middle-aged, African-American lady, who was successfully painting - and exhibiting her painting - at a time when few peers dared even expose their material, let alone in the racist, misogynist and conservative South.

Often to be seen on the streets in her signature white pinafore, it was the performative nature of her practice which brought her to the attention of Larry Borenstein and Allen Jaffe. Working together, these high-octane stalwarts of the city brought **Morgan's** work into dialogue with the wider arts community via Borenstein's art gallery at Preservation Hall.

Morgan's prolific output led to a fast uptake amongst the New Orleans arts community of the 1960s and 1970s, reaching New York via Andy Warhol's *Interview* and a 1973 article by Rosemary Kent. Major exhibitions were to follow, including the Corcoran Gallery's barrier-breaking *Black Folk Art in America 1930-1980* (1982), which toured the US. Almost 40 years after her passing, a major retrospective curated by William Fagaly opened at New York's American Folk Art Museum.

Today **Sister Gertrude Morgan** has been rediscovered by a younger generation of American and international curators. Her work was most recently featured in *Outliers and the American Vanguard Art* (2019), curated by Lynne Cooke and travelled from the National Gallery at the Smithsonian (Washington DC), to the High Museum (Atlanta) and LACMA (Los Angeles). Her emblematic song *I Got a New World in My View* (1970) was featured in the Martin Luther King Jr biopic, *Selma* (2014); and her classic *Let's Make a Record* was reworked by DJ and producer King Britt in 2005.

The Everlasting Gospel Mission of Sister Gertrude Morgan is the first major gallery exhibition of the artist's work to be seen in a European context. For sales and details, please contact The Gallery of **Everything**.

Sister Gertrude was strong and frisky. She described to me how God came to her in a dream, and told her to stop playing the guitar and instead to illustrate the Bible. But God did not say anything about stopping playing the tambourine, so she continued with that.

Lee Friedlander, photographer (2009)

The first time I heard her voice it just pierced my whole spirit.

King Britt, music producer (2005)



Sister Gertrude Morgan
My Marriage to Jesus (c 1970)
acrylic, pencil, pen on paper
17.6 x 26.4 cm, 6⁷/₈ x 10³/₈ “



Sister Gertrude Morgan
New Jerusalem (c 1955)
acrylic, pen, pencil on paper
30 x 61 cm, 11³/₄ x 24¹/₈ “



Sister Gertrude Morgan
untitled (THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL MISSION) (c 1970)
acrylic on board
18.8 x 122 x 1.8 cm, 7³/₈ x 48¹/₈ x 3/₄ “



Sister Gertrude Morgan
Revelations 4th Chapter (c 1969)
 acrylic, pen, pencil on cardboard
 25.2 x 52.9 cm, 9⁷/₈ x 20⁷/₈ "



Sister Gertrude Morgan
Lord I am Doing All the Good I can (c 1967)
 crayon, pen, acrylic on paper
 12.3 x 10.2 cm, 4⁷/₈ x 4¹/₈ "



Sister Gertrude Morgan
untitled (Dan. 7:4) (c 1970)
 acrylic, watercolour, ink on card
 10.2 x 13 cm, 4 x 5 "

photography by Jorge Antony Stride



THE GALLERY OF **EVERYTHING**

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The Gallery of **Everything** is a commercial space for non-academic artists, private art-makers and other alternative creators.

An initiative of The Museum of **Everything**, the gallery engages with a wide network of institutions, artists and curators to place material into major private and public collections. The gallery's roster includes known historical master artists, as well as newly discovered authors. Events include group and solo exhibitions, talks, readings and happenings.

Proceeds from The Gallery of **Everything** help support The Museum of **Everything**, a registered UK charity and non-profit organisation, dedicated to the advancement, integration and celebration of artists and makers beyond the cultural mainstream.



THE MUSEUM OF **EVERYTHING**

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The Museum of Everything opened in London in 2009 and has welcomed over a million visitors to its large-scale installations in Britain, Europe, Russia, America and Australia.

As the UK's leading advocate for non-academic and private art-making, the museum functions as an international exhibitor, archive and activist, collaborating with artists, curators, writers and institutions. These include Tate Modern (UK), Hayward Gallery (UK), Pinacoteca Agnelli (Italy), Kunsthal Rotterdam (Holland) and Garage (Russia).

The Museum of Everything is a lobbyist for the inclusion and display of all forms of non-canonical art. In 2013 it partnered with the 55th Venice Biennale, during which it was profiled by the BBC in *Turning the Art World Inside Out*. The museum is primarily known for its immersive installations, most recently presented at Mona in Australia in 2017/18.

For more information, and for publications, please visit: www.musevery.com