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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EWAN GIBBS
TX / NY

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Lora Reynolds is pleased to announce *TX / NY*, an exhibition of drawings by Ewan Gibbs—the artist's fifth presentation with the gallery. This show marks 20 years of programming by Lora Reynolds Gallery, and particularly saliently, given that Gibbs produced the gallery's second show after its inception in 2005.

For more than 30 years now, Ewan Gibbs has spent almost every day drawing all day long. He is in the studio by 6:30 in the morning, takes breakfast at 9, lunch at 1, a catnap or two or three to keep his mind fresh throughout the day (in his bed, in the room adjacent to his studio), and stops working to walk four miles at 5:30 in the evening. After dinner at 8 he often gets another hour in at his drafting table. All the while, he keeps several mantras close at hand to help keep him focused:

It takes as long as it takes

Just do the next bit

Listen to your body

Double down on delicacy

And try to modulate the fuck of out of it!

Gibbs's drawings are small, grayscale, misty but realistic, and precise. As with the images of New York in this show, most of his drawings are based on snapshots he takes of iconic landmarks (often buildings) he encounters when visiting a place far from home. He grids his source photographs and translates them onto paper, square by square, row by row, into handmade, incomprehensibly delicate facsimiles.

Within this framework, Gibbs is always fine-tuning the technical methods he employs to make his drawings, in pursuit of new possibilities for rendering reality in more nuanced gradations and producing truer visual equivalents of the world. He made his earliest drawings on commercial graph paper, until he began to draw his own grids, until he arrived at the almost-invisible structure he uses now—which he embosses with an etching needle, pricking a single, minuscule point at the four corners of every square cell in a matrix. The dimensions of his grid squares have fluctuated from drawing to drawing between a millimeter and a centimeter, but mostly hover around five millimeters these days. Gibbs's marking strategy—what he actually puts into each cell of a drawing—has varied considerably over the years. Sometimes a diagonal slash, a single X, an O, nine Os, exactly 100 Os; either graphite, or ink, or graphite and ink. His newest mark-making system, however, he calls "extreme pin-pointillism."

Instead of applying one big X or O to each grid square, Gibbs is now laying down the smallest dot of graphite he can muster with a very sharp Faber-Castell 9000 pencil—many many many times over. He has developed his own pencil-sharpening system that is quieter, more consistent, more precise, and more efficient than an electric sharpener. He rakes his pencil across a strip of 600-grit sandpaper, wipes graphite dust from its tip with two successive paper towels, commences drawing, and repeats this process as soon as he can feel the tip starting to blunt—about once a square when using harder pencils, or up to seven or eight times a square with softer graphite. Before advancing to the next cell, Gibbs rolls a kneaded eraser into a fine point and delicately touches its tip to paper to further modulate the marks he just made in that square. He moves through the drawing left to right, top to bottom. For a medium-sized image, he can fill in about four rows in a full day's work. After he addresses every cell with a hard pencil that makes light marks, he goes back over the entire drawing with a softer, darker pencil—and again with another yet softer, and again. Each dot he applies with an equivalent amount of pressure, but given enough time, patience, and pencil grades, Gibbs is able to build a wide and subtle tonal range.

For about the past five years, he has kept elaborate, coded records that track his progress on each drawing as he is making it, some of which are on view in this exhibition. (He calls them "schema system sequences," and most recently, they end up looking like rough versions of the final drawing without any fine detail.) He creates a series of small grids—one for each pencil grade—of identical proportions to the drawing he is working on. For each grid square on each tracking sheet, he tallies the number of times he sharpened his pencil while working on the corresponding square in the drawing—32K, say—before moving on to its adjacent square, 32L. And then he notes the date he completes each row. Gibbs designed this record-keeping system to help hold his graphite application consistent across a drawing that takes many months to complete. But exactly how he makes his drawings and how he tracks their production changes in little ways with nearly every new work—so much so that over time, he sometimes loses the ability to decode his own records.

The New York drawings offer views of the Empire State Building, Flatiron, Guggenheim, a line of yellow cabs, and several pastoral scenes from Central Park. Because they were made between 2008 and 2025, they offer a broad look at the slow evolution of Gibbs's drawing practice. His primary focus on familiar buildings and scenes, however, has remained consistent—the archetypal imagery he prefers ("a honey trap," he calls it) is meant to be relatable and transportive, to remind viewers of their own experiences of and feelings about a place.

The Texas drawings are the first body of work Gibbs has ever made that was not borne of a visit to a place—they deal in symbology rather than pictorial representation. We see the shape of the state of Texas—perhaps mundane to a Texan, but Gibbs is British: this image might be more recognizable and more richly associative around the world than the celebrity buildings in his other work. Several drawings present three-letter codes for Amtrak stations in big Texas cities. The light gray backgrounds and paper-white letters offered Gibbs a novel technical challenge—how accurately could he create a perfectly even field of graphite (or a perfectly even gradient) with pin-pointillism? (More difficult than one might think, he reports.)

Additionally, the Texas drawings demonstrate an evolution in Gibbs's subject matter that mirrors (and inverts) the years-long progression of his drawing technique: moving from Xs and Os to tiny, tiny dots has increased the resolution of his drawings,

increased the amount of visual information he puts into them, and in so doing, reduced the distance between the viewer and the place he is depicting (there's less *oh-that's-a-drawing* in the way). The Amtrak drawings operate associatively in much the same way the New York drawings do (what memories do you have of Austin, Dallas, Houston?), but Gibbs achieves this end by stripping away any and all modulation, by replacing a photographic source image with three flat geometric shapes—HOS, for example—that happen to be letters and, together, have the potential to carry huge amounts of information. Moving toward drawing letters instead of pictures (reducing visual information) and moving toward marking with tiny dots instead of Xs and Os (increasing visual information) are equivalent progressions: in both cases, Gibbs is forging a more direct connection between his subject and the viewer by making more transparent the veil of the medium of drawing between the two.

Gibbs has included in this show a drawing of his longtime friend and art dealer, Lora Reynolds. Lora is the keystone of *TX / NY*: she was born in Texas, lived in New York at the beginning of her career, and moved back to Texas to start a family and open her own gallery. And, as mentioned, this show marks 20 years of conversation, personal growth, and a shared love of art. Oddly enough, almost exactly 20 years to the day—Gibbs's first project at the gallery, *From the Empire State Building*, opened May 7, 2005; this show opened May 3, 2025.

Whenever Lora describes Ewan or his work to someone new, she recounts that every time they speak, Ewan always tells her how long it has been since they were last in touch—whether ten days, 68, or 319. He explains this quirk by saying, "I remember when I speak to people because I don't speak to many people or very often." Lora counters, "It's weirder than that. He is uncommonly sensitive to time, its passage, keeping track of it. It runs through his entire being. His preoccupation with time is the big, central, core of his work that not everyone gets to see."

Gibbs spent *every day of seven consecutive months* making his new portrait of Lora. He used all possible hardness grades of pencil he could find—sixteen Faber-Castell 9000 pencils from 6H to 8B, plus another four harder pencils from another brand—and attended to every cell in the drawing's 40 rows with each of those 20 pencils before advancing to the next softer one. Essentially, he slowly drew the same drawing of Lora on top of itself *twenty times*. The paper developed a subtle wave after all the time and attention Gibbs poured into it. He considers the ripple a feature, a record, and has requested it not be flattened.

After his first day working on the portrait, having finished the first four rows, Gibbs knew exactly how long it would take him to complete. He knows how many drawings he can make in a year. He has a guess at how many he might make over the rest of his life. He hopes he can keep his pace up, continue developing his craft, moving closer to representing the world in yet finer gradations, with more nuance and sensitivity and greater awareness and appreciation of the present moment. If he succeeds, he imagines looking back and seeing a life well lived—a torch carried proudly, with everything he could bring to it. He will have continued the tradition artists of all kinds have been engaged in for hundreds, maybe thousands of years: of dedicating their lives trying to make images that somehow represent life as we perceive it, and moving the goalposts a little further out after each successive attempt.

The clock ticks. 7,301 days passed between Gibbs's first opening at the gallery and this one. Time is too short. He must get back to work.

Ewan Gibbs, born in 1973 in London, lives and works in Oxfordshire. He has mounted solo presentations at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. He has participated in shows at the Art Institute of Chicago, DePaul Art Museum (Chicago), Drawing Center (New York), FLAG Art Foundation (New York), and Weatherspoon Art Museum (Greensboro). His work is housed in the collections of the Blanton Museum of Art (Austin), Dallas Museum of Art, Denver Art Museum, Fogg Museum (Cambridge, Massachusetts), FRAC des Pays de la Loire (France), Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), High Museum of Art (Atlanta), Museum of London, Museum of Modern Art (New York), Tate Modern (London), and Whitworth Art Gallery (Manchester).