

PearlLam Galleries

Shanghai

SCAPEs

DAVID LACHAPELLE solo exhibition

Exhibition Dates 9 September–31 October, 2017 Monday–Sunday, 10:30am–7pm

Venue Pearl Lam Galleries, 181 Middle Jiangxi Road, G/F, Shanghai, China 200002

Shanghai—Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present *SCAPEs*, the first solo exhibition by acclaimed American photographer **David LaChapelle** in Shanghai, China, on show from 9 September to 31 October, 2017.

This exclusive exhibition presents the Asian premiere of selected works from *New World*, David LaChapelle's newest photographic series. A survey highlighting themes throughout the artist's thirty-year career, *SCAPEs* includes selections representing LaChapelle's early editorial projects and his progressive return to fine art.

SCAPEs is arranged around a thematic embodiment of LaChapelle's varying oeuvres—from portraiture to landscapes and hyper-realistic to surrealistic settings, with satirical and ingenious narratives—to convey the artist's critical observations of our society and his ultimate pursuit of the eternal.

While pursuing a career in photography in the late 1980s, the 17-year-old LaChapelle was offered his first job by Andy Warhol to shoot for *Interview Magazine*, which exposed him to international publications and personalities. As one of a few who are able to balance editorial and fine art photography as a language of self-expression, LaChapelle revolutionizes the art form by attempting a holistic rendering of personage, religion, and social-environmentalism through bold, vibrant, and of-the-moment stylistic palettes and inventiveness.

Largely inspired by art histories and pop culture, parts of LaChapelle's work evoke classical motifs and contemporary art to provide alternative readings of iconic images. His *After the Deluge* (2007) series, inspired by Michelangelo's Genesis-based fresco, depicts priceless masterpieces in water-flooded galleries. A similar clash between catastrophe and civilization reoccurs in *Seismic Shift* (2012), where a collection of the most sought-after contemporary artworks is depicted in the aftermath of an earthquake. The absence of humans, or rather humanity, in these works reflects the transience of fame and ownership, and further questions the meanings behind these art pieces when mankind is no longer in the picture. Also paying tribute to popular culture, LaChapelle portrays his muse Amanda Lepore, the transgender icon, as Hollywood icons Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, as presented in Andy Warhol's prints from the 1960s, underpinning his interest in unorthodox beauty and femininity.

In LaChapelle's *Gas* (2012) and *Land SCAPE* (2013) series, the battle between nature and civilization continues in meticulously chosen settings with crafted sets. Here, gas stations and factories are immersed in an ethereal neon-glow, making them look more appealing than they do in reality. They are scaled models made with everyday objects such as straws, cans, and other industrial products. The irony continues as these models are placed and shot in natural landscapes. The absence of characters and narrative further emphasizes the artist's focus on social-environmental issues.

The artist's awe of the sublime and his quest for spirituality are ubiquitous in his latest series, *New World* (2017). The call of the wild, with representational imagery, is depicted in this series as a

reactionary tendency against the metropolis or cosmopolitanism, exemplified by the appeal of wildlife and the regain of consciousness and empathy for the inherent nature of mankind. This commingling of religious and natural imagery evokes a notion of faith centred on not merely how religion defines individual identity, but on how spirituality creates community and belonging.

The exhibition will present highlights of LaChapelle's works from the 1990s and 2000s, which revolve around fashion and show-business and aim to elicit emotional responses. These works include celebrity portraits of Lady Gaga, Bruce Lee, and Uma Thurman, as well as perfectly staged scenes for magazine spreads that often draw on social and pop cultural references. The extravagance and exaggeration mirror our consumer society and the cult of the star system. Nevertheless, the camera not only captures the unique nuances of these already-familiar icons, but also encapsulates the relationship between the face before and the man behind it.

LaChapelle's work will continue to reflect the interests and ambitions of his generation. In a sense, all forms of cultural marginalia—beliefs, spectacles and speculations from society's fringes, along with excessiveness that has held a strong grip on the imagination, expressions of desires and pleasures unknown—is for him to reach out to and express. We sense the time it took to create the photographs even as we understand them to be timeless.

About the Artist

David LaChapelle was born in Connecticut and attended high school at North Carolina School of the Arts. He embarked on a career in photography, and by the late 1980s began showing his work in New York City galleries. LaChapelle's work caught the eye of Andy Warhol who offered him his first job as a photographer at *Interview Magazine*, in which his photographs of celebrities garnered positive attention. Before long, LaChapelle was shooting for a variety of top editorial publications and creating some of the most memorable advertising campaigns of his generation.

Having been established as a fixture in contemporary photography, LaChapelle branched out to direct commercials, music videos, and theatrical stage productions, including Elton John's *Red Piano* live show.

In 2004, an underground movement of young dancers in South Central Los Angeles compelled LaChapelle to create the short documentary entitled *Krumped*. He developed the short into the feature film *RIZE*, which officially opened the 2005 Tribeca Film Festival, followed by a critically acclaimed global theatrical release.

In 2006, LaChapelle returned to his roots in fine art photography. He began to present his work in solo exhibitions at spaces including Lever House, New York; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico; Hangaram Design Museum, Seoul; Fotografiska Museet, Stockholm; and Tel Aviv Museum of Art, etc.

LaChapelle continued exhibiting at institutions including National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; National Museum, Krakow; Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover, Germany; Lu.C.C.A. Center of Contemporary Art Museum, Italy; Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto; KunstHausWien, Vienna; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Lima, Peru; Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile; Barbican Centre, London; Palazzo Reale, Milan; Museo del Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, Mexico City; Musée de la Monnaie de Paris; National Portrait Gallery, London; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan.

In the past two years, LaChapelle has secured solo exhibitions at DSC Gallery, Prague; Museo de Arte, Buenos Aires; and Ara Modern Art, Seoul; as well as major exhibitions at Instituto Cultural Cabanas in Guadalajara, Mexico; Casa dei Tre Oci in Venice; and Beaux Arts in Mons, Belgium. LaChapelle will open the 2017 Ballarat International Foto Festival with his first exhibition in Australia.

Over the course of his 30-year career, LaChapelle has been honoured with numerous photography awards and a doctorate from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

In the fall of 2017, LaChapelle will release *Lost & Found* and *Good News* from TASCHEN publishers. The release of these two books complete his five-book anthology, which began with *LaChapelle Land* (1996) and continued with *Hotel LaChapelle* (1999) and *Heaven to Hell* (2006).

About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience exhibiting Asian and Western art and design, it is one of the leading and most established contemporary art galleries to be launched out of China.

Playing a vital role in stimulating international dialogue on Chinese and Asian contemporary art, the Galleries is dedicated to championing artists who re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice from the region. The Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore collaborate with renowned curators, each presenting distinct programming from major solo exhibitions, special projects, and installations to conceptually rigorous group shows. Based on the philosophy of Chinese Literati where art forms have no hierarchy, Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines, with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

The four branches of Pearl Lam Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore represent an increasingly influential roster of contemporary artists. Chinese artists Zhu Jinshi and Su Xiaobai, who synthesize Chinese sensibilities with an international visual language, are presented internationally with work now included in major private and public collections worldwide. The Galleries has also introduced leading international artists, such as Jenny Holzer, Leonardo Drew, Carlos Rolón/Dzine, and Yinka Shonibare MBE, to markets in the region, providing opportunities for new audiences in Asia to encounter their work. Pearl Lam Galleries encourages international artists to create new work which engages specifically with the region, collaborating to produce thought-provoking, culturally relevant work.

Press Enquiries

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