

PearlLam Galleries

Hong Kong

VESSELS OF MEMORY

Featuring works by Alimi Adewale, Enrico Marone Cinzano, Philip Colbert, Leonardo Drew, Du Zhenjun, Gonkar Gyatso, David LaChapelle, Antony Micallef, Samuel Nnorom, Babajide Olatunji, Gatot Pujiarto, Michael Staniak, and Danful Yang

Exhibition dates 15 November–21 December, 2024
Monday–Saturday, 10am–7pm

Venue Pearl Lam Galleries, G/F, Ruttonjee House, Ruttonjee Centre,
3–11 Duddell Street, Central, Hong Kong

Hong Kong—Marcel Proust once said, “The only paradise is paradise lost,” highlighting the bittersweet nature of memory. Titled *Vessels of Memory*, this group exhibition investigates how memories shape our sense of being in a world with rapid social changes through the work of 13 artists including Alimi Adewale (b. 1974, Nigeria), Enrico Marone Cinzano (b. 1967, Italy), Philip Colbert (b. 1979, UK), Leonardo Drew (b. 1961, USA), Du Zhenjun (b. 1961, China), Gonkar Gyatso (b. 1961, Tibet), David LaChapelle (b. 1963, USA), Antony Micallef (b. 1975, UK), Samuel Nnorom (b. 1990, Nigeria), Babajide Olatunji (b. 1989, Nigeria), Gatot Pujiarto (b. 1970, Indonesia), Michael Staniak (b. 1982, Australia), and Danful Yang (b. 1980, China). Divided into five distinctive chapters, this cyclical exhibition addresses the formation, deformation, loss, and preservation of our memories. Audiences are invited to transverse between different spheres to come to terms with the amorphous qualities of memory.

Chapter I: Nostalgia, Transience, and Collective Memories

Danful Yang reinvents traditional Chinese arts and crafts by using contemporary materials from the West to create dynamic design objects. *Fake Chair*, one of her iconic pieces, uses upholstery made with leather from fake designer handbags to create a hybrid Chinese and Rococo style armchair. By turning appropriation on its back, Yang illuminates our search for genuine authenticity in a consumerist world.

Born in Connecticut, David LaChapelle’s vivid and highly charged compositions have quickly garnered him international acclaim. Known for his bold use of colour and surreal tableaux, he transforms traditional photography into diverse forms of social commentary. LaChapelle’s iconic celebrity portraits expose the fleeting nature and emptiness of fame.

Chapter II: Decoding the Memory Process

Samuel Nnorom discovered his artistic talent early on when he began to assist his parents at their shoe and tailoring workshops. His three-dimensional works employ discarded materials, including vibrant Ankara fabric and foam remnants, and are put together by means of sewing, rolling, typing, stringing,

and suspending. Fragments come together to form an organic and physical entity that speaks of the memories of his Nigerian heritage. In *Sacrificial Living*, Nnorom explores themes of community, purity, and shared rituals and invites viewers to share their own memories as an open process.

Philip Colbert incorporates his lobster alter ego in his work to explore the crossover between high art and contemporary pop culture. By staging fictional landscapes that centre around his lobster character, Colbert's paintings are loaded with classical symbols and iconography. He states, "As an artist, I was obsessed with communicating through symbols, and the lobster as a bright red symbol of mortality and surrealism really struck me."

Nigerian-born artist Babajide Olatunji employs the technique of hyperrealism for making his portraits that often depict imaginary characters from diverse social strata. The artist's paintings of faces with facial marks with chiaroscuro effects prompt viewers to contemplate themes of fate, identity, loss, and kinship. Painting for Olatunji serves as a vehicle for *mementos mori*, reminding us of the universal destiny we all share in the journey of life.

Chapter III: The Materiality and Non-Materiality of Memories

Australian artist Michael Staniak's paintings embrace the experience of the tactile qualities of traditional painting and the sublime of the digital world as our memories have become increasingly fluid in a technology driven world. In an environment where computer generated imagery and rapid electronic transmission have become the social norm, Staniak's work provides a poignant critique of our incessant desire to consume imagery.

Gatot Pujiarto's artistic practice delves into the anomalies and tragedies of everyday life. His collages with multiple layers of fabric encourage us to reassess our interpretation of what art is. By working with different colours and fabric patterns, Pujiarto emphasises how memories can be both tangible and abstract, shaped by our interactions with the world and marked by traces of our everyday experiences. Thus, our visual experience of art relies solely on our own memories, the way we embody what is ephemeral and temporal.

Enrico Marone Cinzano's works embody a respect for natural resources and craftsmanship. They investigate whether or not aesthetic beauty can be balanced with eco-conscious designs. Drawing inspiration from his rich architectural upbringing, Cinzano creates functional art with limited resources. Each piece serves as a tangible reminder of our collective creativity and resourcefulness, while encouraging us to reflect on our relationship with the environment and the positive impact of sustainable design on our lives.

Chapter IV: Memories Are Self-Scrutinised, Layered, and Constantly Reshaped

Antony Micallef experiments with the physical quality of paint. His exploration of form and texture has transformed painting into a new association of embodiment. Micallef turns paint into a material that can be weaved and mosaicked in a way that echoes leather, armour, and different winding floral textures. By depicting a human character imbued with emotional struggle, Micallef examines our thought process and psychological makeup.

Leonardo Drew's three-dimensional objects express the weight of memory through his use of materials. By incorporating found materials that evoke socio-political issues in relation to his Afro-American ethnicity, his wall-mounted sculptural works express the resilience of the human spirit and highlight the contradictions that shape our understanding of self.

Chapter V: Fragmentation and Reconciliation

Du Zhenjun works primarily in digital media to critique various social conditions in a technological society. His digital photographs explore themes of fragmentation and chaos, reflecting the disjointed nature of contemporary existence. In works like *Babel World*, Du invites viewers to consider how memories are shaped by mass media and what we can preserve for ourselves. His photographs serve as capsules of collective memories to aid us in coming to terms with our past in a rapidly evolving world.

Gonkar Gyatso blends traditional art with contemporary pop culture. His works challenge us to consider the impact of mass media on our perceptions of self. By consolidating diverse cultural signs into a single object, Gyatso highlights the fragmentation of one's identity in a globalised world and our struggle with the evolving nature of tradition.

Alimi Adewale's works explore the impact of rapid development on community and identity. His textured pieces evoke the layers of experience inherent in city living, prompting viewers to reflect on their own memories amidst the chaos of modernity. By engaging with themes of time and mortality, Adewale's art delves into the ongoing reconciliation of personal and collective histories in a fast-paced world.





About Pearl Lam Galleries

Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. Founded in 2005, the gallery plays a vital role in stimulating international dialogue and cross-cultural exchange between the East and West.

Following a rigorous programme, Pearl Lam Galleries presents museum-quality exhibitions that re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice in Asia. With a thoughtfully balanced roster of Chinese and international artists, the gallery is strategic in its curation, positioning itself as an educator.

The gallery maintains spaces in Hong Kong and Shanghai. With a team of international staff, Pearl Lam Galleries' reach is global, having presentations at major international art fairs including Art Cologne, Art Basel, Frieze Masters, and West Bund Art and Design.

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