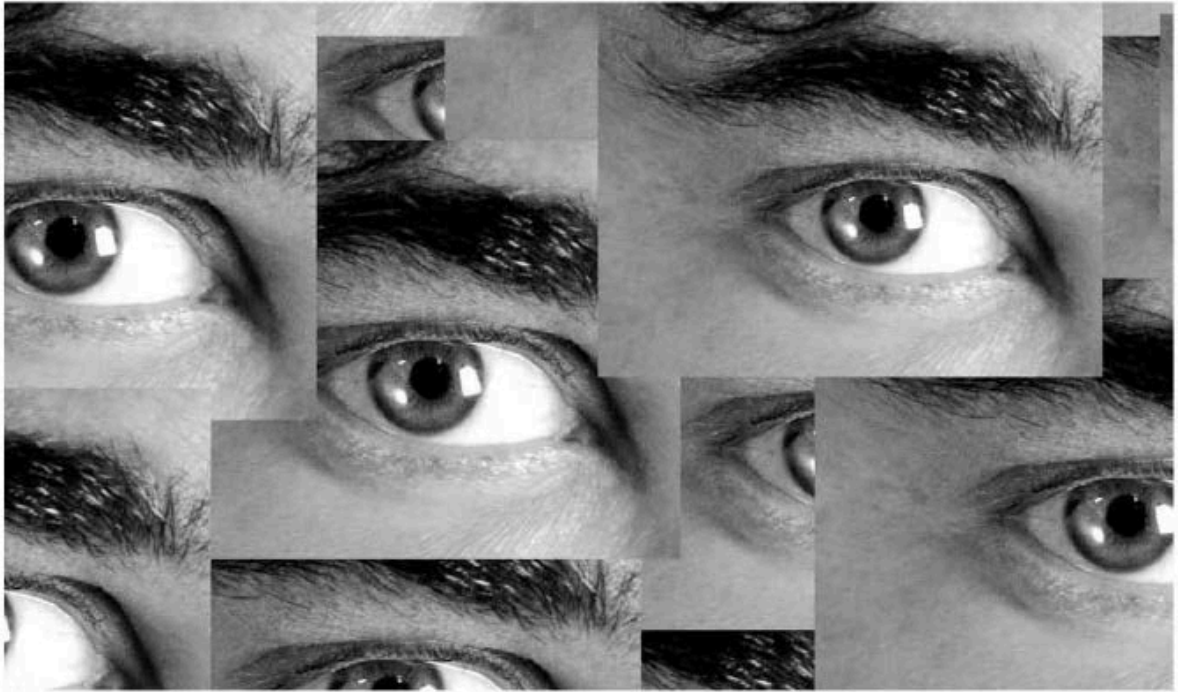


Galerie Daniel Templon
Paris

DAVID LACHAPELLE
MUSÉE MAGAZINE, 2012



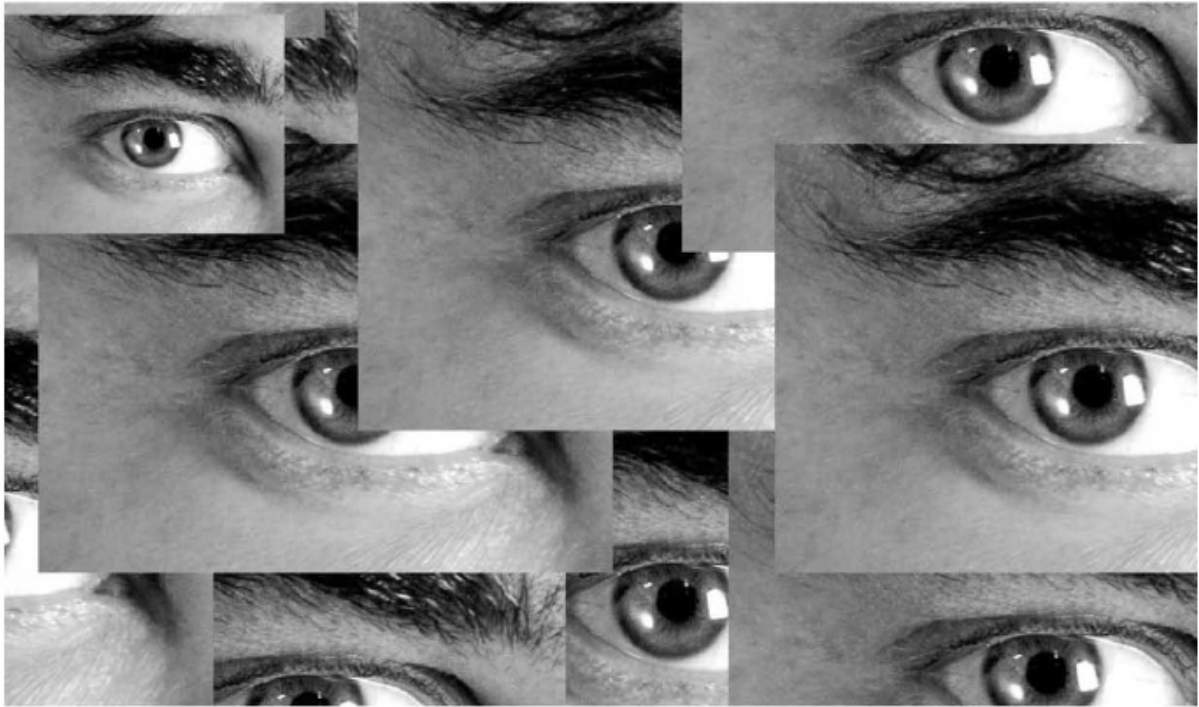
**DAVID
LACHAPELLE**

SURREAL TO
SUBLIME

Galerie Daniel Templon

Paris

DAVID LACHAPELLE
MUSÉE MAGAZINE, 2012



David LaChapelle is inspired by everything from art history and street culture to the Hawaiian jungle in which he lives, projecting an image of twenty-first century pop culture through his work that is both loving and critical. He has an exceptional talent for combining a unique hyper-realistic aesthetic with profound social messages. His career began in the 1980's when he started showing his artwork in New York City galleries. Catching the eye of Andy Warhol, who offered him his first photography job at Interview Magazine, LaChapelle gained recognition by shooting memorable photographs of celebrities. Later in his career, his striking images graced the covers and pages of Italian Vogue, French Vogue, Vanity Fair, GQ, Rolling Stone and i-D. He has photographed personalities as diverse as Tupac Shakur, Madonna, Lance Armstrong, Elizabeth Taylor, David Beckham, Leonardo DiCaprio, Hillary Clinton, and Muhammad Ali. LaChapelle has also branched out to direct music videos for artists to live theatrical events, and direct documentary films. His directing credits include music videos for artists such as Christina Aguilera, Moby, Jennifer Lopez, Britney Spears, stage work for Elton John's The Red Piano and the Caesar's Palace spectacular, and Sundance award winning Krumped documentary film.

He has had record breaking solo museum exhibitions at the Barbican Museum, London (2002), Palazzo Reale, Milan (2007), Museo del Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, Mexico City (2009), the Musée de La Monnaie, Paris (2009), and the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel.

<http://www.davidlachapelle.com/>

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DAVID LACHAPELLE MUSÉE MAGAZINE, 2012

Musée Magazine

What's the smartest thing you've ever done for your career?

The smartest thing that I've ever done was really follow my gut, my heart, and not just rely on my intellect. We all have the answers, you know? It's just sometimes we can't hear them with all the noise of the world. So, yeah, the smartest thing I ever did in my career was really trust my intuition.

Who do you think was most helpful to you during your career?

Oh, God, so many people. It's such a collaboration. There was Louis - who was my student manager - who passed away ten years ago. He worked with me for 17 years. We started out when we were both 17. He died when he was 34 - heart failure - in my studio. He was incredible. He worked for two years for free for me, because I was just starting out in the East Village. I didn't have a studio; I was just working out of my apartment - a semi-squat apartment. I mean, paid rent, but no electricity. It was a leaky little place, but we loved it. And then he managed my studio and he was at the end of his life, but he was just running my shit. There was also Fred Torres. He was incredible to me. So many people, my "art people" I call them. I worked closely with Chrystal Ballow, Annie Sperling. They were the people I worked with the most on the sets and all the scenery. Also the stylists, the models, the subjects... Then there's been this group of people that I've worked with for twenty years or more, and while there hasn't really been this continuity in my life, with all the traveling, and moving around, the one thing that always remained were the people. It feels like family almost. You make this work together. It's collaborative and everyone's invested in it, and those relationships are priceless.

Is procrastination your friend or your enemy?

When it comes to my pictures there is never any procrastination. I mean I'm really passionate when it comes to my work, so I'm really over-aggressive. So there's no procrastination there. When it comes to sorting my clothing drawer or junk drawer, that's a whole other story. It's a disaster. A lot of things get a little bit neglected. I haven't been as good of a partner romantically as maybe I could have, because I'm so in love with what I do. I mean I haven't written a thank you note. I have this list of people that I have to write "thank you" notes to, for little gestures or work that they've done, and I just don't. I'm just consumed.

Once there was this major chaos going on in the studio, and I was just having this total meltdown. I was under a lot of pressure with deadlines and stuff, so I would take that pressure and transfer it to my crew, and they always understood, because they loved me. And I always felt bad afterwards if I lost my shit. And they would forgive

me. But once there was this really dear friend who was working for me, who helped me get my first book published, Sandy. She came from working with Irving Penn, which was like a laboratory, you know you had to wear uniforms, and it was very quiet. So she comes into this circus, and I was apologizing to her for some kind of freak out or something, and she was like, "I didn't think that freak out would just end with the photo. I just knew there would be some kind of spill over, so I was kind of expecting. But yeah, don't let it happen again." You have to have people around you that can talk straight with you, and that's what happens when you have people in your life for a long time: you get the best. Because you create an atmosphere where everyone feels like they can contribute. Even an intern can make a comment, and it will help to make the image better in the end. Like somebody brought an artichoke to the shoot, which was a staple in a lot of the old master's still life's, and I was like, "Yeah, we need an artichoke."

What caused you to change your career path?

Starting at galleries as a kid, and then working for magazines, where the magazines became my gallery in a sense, I wanted to make a real impact. So I tried putting my own subtext, my own meaning into my photos, and it was really fulfilling. But at a certain point, you grow up. I really love fashion and beauty, its something that people are just really attracted to, but I just didn't love the fashion world or the celebrity world. At a certain point my pictures didn't feel like they were meeting the needs of the magazine and stories were becoming more difficult to get published. I was really getting feedback that they were nervous working around me. It was just a lot of pressure, and was no longer a fit as it had been, so I just stopped. So after the third book came out, I really felt like the series was completed. I always thought it as a trilogy and really didn't feel like I had anything left to say.

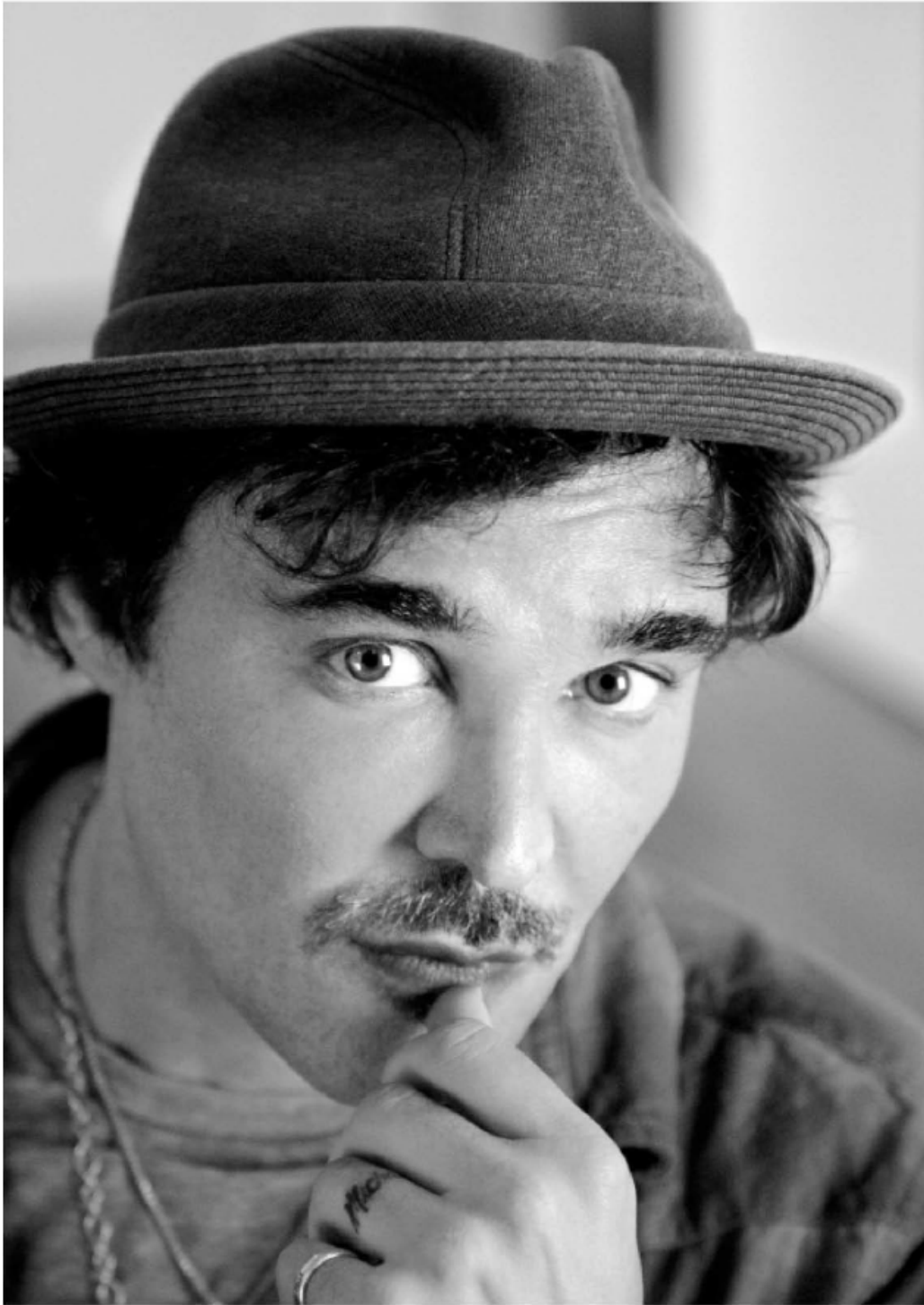
If a magazine came to you today - an editorial magazine - and said you could do whatever you want, would you do it?

No, not really. Because I'm doing really what I want to do. When you look at a photograph hanging in a gallery or museum, they're exactly how I want them to be seen, they're the size I want them to be. They're the exact print - not a third generation or second generation print. It's not on a video screen. It's not a reproduction of the image: it is the image. There's a freedom, but it's also more challenging when you have to come up with your own parameters. The nature of a fashion shoot is always limiting. But when I do work for myself, I can do whatever I want, so I really have to bring myself in, and give myself guidelines or rules that I need to follow. We can't make nature, which is the only other place where you can find the sublime, but rarely in art. Every once in a while, you can find the sublime in art.

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I know you're used to working with a big crew on fashion shoots etc. Is it more isolating working on your own stuff?

It's less hectic. I mean fashion shoots are a lot more chaotic, but I really work with the same group of people.

I mean, those relationships I created through working on magazines, I've really carried them on into my fine art work. It's really not that much of a leap for them because they always came from more of [an art], not a pure fashion background. I was never a real fashion insider.

And I don't really want to be an art world insider either because I don't really want to make art just for the art world. I want to make it for the world in general.

"Late Summer"

© David LaChapelle, Courtesy of Fred Torres Collaborations, New York

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DAVID LACHAPELLE MUSÉE MAGAZINE, 2012

What did you learn from working with celebrities?

Magazines - for twenty years - were really my education, they were my college. Julian Schnable had a really great quote, he said, "When you're really ready to have your own show, wait two years," and I feel like I waited twenty. I had those early shows in the 80's, and then I kind of took these twenty years to work in magazines, and I really learned, I really grew up. And then now I actually came back to those themes, those ideas that were important to me when I was younger, once I started working again for galleries. There's much more expected of a photograph hanging in a gallery or museum wall than there is of one in a magazine, and I take that seriously. I want to give people that sustenance, that nourishment that people are looking for. I really think there is just way too much art for the art world.

.....

"You really need to focus. You can't just sort of do music, or sort of be a photographer. There are too many people that are passionate about it. You can't really dabble too much in a lot of things. You really need to devote yourself."

.....

-David LaChapelle

What advice would you have for a photographer just starting out?

Turn off your personal devices: cell phones, computers. You need to get away. For me, getting away was always in nature. I was always lucky because when I was growing up, my parents had this great house in Connecticut, a two and a half hour bus ride from port authority. So luckily, I could go home. And my parents lived in the woods, on this beautiful mountain surrounded by reservoirs. And I would go there and figure out my life's problems, and direction, by sitting in the woods, and praying and meditating, and really trying to get answers. Answers would come, but it was in stillness. And it was all alone. It was a really difficult time. AIDS was killing a lot of my friends. I thought I was going to die. And I just cant say enough how important it is to rely on your inner voice, your gut, whatever you want to call it. I truly believe the answers are inside of us, so making quiet time.

Also, when your young you can be so good at so many things, music, art. You really need to focus. You can't just sort of do music, or sort of be a photographer. There are too many people that are passionate about it. You can't really dabble too much in a lot of things. You really need

to devote yourself. I mean look at Francesca Woodman, she died so young, but that girl was - that's obsession. So if your going to just dabble it's not going to work, unless you just want it to be a hobby, which is fine, but those are things you need to figure out. And those are things you can't ask someone else. You can't ask your teachers, or your friends. You have to go inside of yourself.

I think art versus fashion, for a young photographer to get published or get out there and see. I mean I was doing weddings. My first real gig was with Condé Nast Traveler for ten years. I wanted to see the whole world, and I really got to. It was the first ten years with the magazine, and I got to go everywhere. I took friends with me, and talk about what an incredible opportunity. I mean when your traveling when your young, with your friends, what are you going to fight about? It's always going to be money, but here we are with an expense account.

I mean I was in my twenties and traveling around the world with my friends. And this was before the Internet, so we would just call up and be like, "It's been raining all week." And so we would get an extra week to be in these places. But I think you have to, I mean, let's say you want to be a photographer. You have to diversify yourself as much as you can. Unless you come from money, you have to work. I mean weddings taught me something, travel photography taught me something, and they all lead into what I'm doing today.

What inspired this [current] show?

I just really wanted to do this series of flowers inspired by the old masters, and take their idea of the narrative, where all the objects in the image helped tell a story. I wanted to do it as a photograph, but I wanted the photographs to feel like paintings. Like the Photorealists, who made paintings that looked like photographs, I wanted these photographs to feel like paintings. I really wanted to engage the conversation that these Old Masters were in, where every object had symbolism. We really live in a disposable society. In these old paintings the objects were of great value, so now these objects no longer have the same symbolism. So, I used these disposable objects to really communicate that. ■

Interview by Andrea Blanch

Photograph of David LaChapelle by Andrea Blanch

All other photographs Courtesy of Fred Torres Collaborations, New York

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MUSÉE MAGAZINE, 2012



"Early Fall"
© David LaChapelle, Courtesy of Fred Torres Collaborations, New York

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"Risk"
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"America"
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"Springtime"
© David LaChapelle, Courtesy of Fred Torres Collaborations, New York

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"Ruth"
© David LaChapelle, Courtesy of Fred Torres Collaborations, New York

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"Jesse"
© David LaChapelle, Courtesy of Fred Torres Collaborations, New York

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"Delilah"
© David LaChapelle, Courtesy of Fred Torres Collaborations, New York

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"Abram"

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