

## FRED TORRES COLLABORATIONS

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# ARTEFUSE

New York

## LaChapelle's Garden of Earthly Delights

By Oscar A. Laluyan



Photo by Oscar A. Laluyan

For every season, there is a time and reason. And what better time for legendary artistic photographer, David LaChapelle, to share his abundant work of ten large photographs at Fred Torres Collaborations with an opening reception last February 23, 2012 for his show "Earth Laughs in Flowers". Since initially showing this series in Hannover, Germany last year – this is the first time it will be shown in its entirety in the United States.

The title was taken from the Ralph Waldo Emerson poem "Hamatreya" (1846) in which flowers vocalize what nature considers man's arrogant pretense to dominate the earth. LaChapelle has appropriated the Baroque still life composition of the cornucopia arrangement of fruits and flowers to explore modern maladies such as vanity, vice, the temporary shelf life of earthly goods, and how fragile our humanity can be. At first glance, one immediately grasps the still life components of a

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classic painting of fruits, flowers and skulls but LaChapelle inserts modern everyday objects like cell phones, canned goods, birthday helium balloons, cigarette butts, and other unlikely detritus to upend the almost painterly aspect of his photographs. Hidden in the dense array of the still life are veiled symbolisms of sexuality. Any artist can be provocative but LaChapelle is clever by being subtle in his treatment of such elements. Certain flowers signify the female organ, asparagus stalks or flower pistils are phallic symbols, the Barbie and Ken Doll with the apple is a diorama of the original sin of Adam and Eve, and other wry statements exposes man's wallowing in the excesses of earthly accoutrements. In all these abundance, there lies the folly of man's arrogance and downfall.

The ten photographs in the gallery have the changes of season all arranged to illustrate how fleeting this life can be and so many useless things are consumed to pass or buy the time. Like Hieronymus Bosch who illustrated in his work *The Garden of Earthly Delights* its stark horror, compacted truths and lush textured disorderly abundance, LaChapelle is very successful in this series to make the viewer reflective of mortality, how fragile life can be, and to live *Carpe Diem* as it all can be all over in the blink of an eye.

"Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys..." – Now is that laughter thrown in as spiteful or sympathetic? Observe what LaChapelle has shown in this series and maybe you can decipher it in your own truth.

*Earth Laughs in Flowers*

On view: February 23 – March 24, 2012

Gallery Hours: Monday to Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm

Fred Torres Collaborations. 527 W 29th Street. New York, NY 10001