

<http://artinfo.com/news/story/761135/25-questions-for-photographer-david-lachapelle>

Article posted on February 27, 2012

ARTINFO

25 Questions for Photographer David LaChapelle

By Chloe Wyma



Photographer David LaChapelle

Name: David LaChapelle

Occupation: Artist

City/Neighborhood: East Maui

What project are you working on now?

A return to paradise.

Your new body of work features photographs of baroque flower arrangements. As someone who became famous photographing people, what draws you to this surprising new genre?

I love stories/narratives that can be found in the old masters' still lifes. Every object and even certain flowers carry symbolic meaning. For me it's about the "vanitas," the idea of transitions in life,

FRED TORRES COLLABORATIONS

527 W 29TH ST, NEW YORK, NY 10001 T212.244.5074 F212.244.5075 FREDTORRES.COM

nature, and how they remind us of our own mortality, the brevity of life, and the beauty in each season.

It's the stuff of legend that, after quitting a project with Madonna, you withdrew to a remote former-nudist colony in Maui to rethink your life and career. What made you decide to move into fine art photography?

A phone call asking me to make new pictures for an exhibition in Berlin that took me by surprise, and also back to where I first began my career exhibiting in art galleries.

Your work contains tropes that are sometimes disparaged by the contemporary art world, such as grand religious metaphors, epic tableaux, and a celebration of consumerism and celebrity culture. Do you feel your work has been misunderstood by the mainstream art world?

I'm just a soul whose intentions are good. Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood.

You've shot more than a few famous faces, from Hillary Clinton to Courtney Love. Of all the people you've shot, who was the most interesting and why?

Muhammad Ali, who's been a hero of mine since I was a young boy. I always wanted to meet him and to photograph him. For me he is a true hero. He took a stand against fighting in the Vietnam War, which could have ended his young career. His faith, courage, humor, beauty, and kindness to my entire staff was astonishing.

You have been known to borrow poses, themes, and tropes from art history in your photographs. Which artists have influenced you the most?

Michelangelo and Michael Jackson.

You famously were discovered at age 17 by Andy Warhol, who offered you a job at *Interview Magazine*. What's your favorite memory of him?

He and I were in the kitchen and he was yelling because someone threw out a coffee tin that still had some coffee grains in it. I was looking at this — here he was, digging into the garbage and yelling. I thought it was very touching — it reminded me of my mom, a war refugee from Eastern Europe, who also saved everything.

What's the last show that you saw?

“Glee.”

What's the last show that surprised you? Why?

The Edward Kienholz installation “5 Car Stud” at LACMA in Los Angeles. It moved me in a way I've never felt before when seeing a work of art. It was haunting, especially the idea of leaving footprints in the sand becoming part of the scene. It's one of the most powerful works I've ever seen.

What's your favorite place to see art?

Public school art rooms.

Do you make a living off your art?

Since I was 18.

FRED TORRES COLLABORATIONS

527 W 29TH ST, NEW YORK, NY 10001 T212.244.5074 F212.244.5075 FREDTORRES.COM

What's the most indispensable item in your studio?

The windows.

Where are you finding ideas for your work these days?

They are heaven-sent.

Do you collect anything?

Friends' works. People I have known. I have a great collection of Keith Harings. I recently got a public phone booth that Shepard Fairey put a lot of love into. I have a nice Cecily Brown, Gretchen Ryan, a few small Warhols. My favorites are the three portraits of Muhammad Ali.

What's the last artwork you purchased?

Luca Pizzaroni's garbage bag paintings.

What's the first artwork you ever sold?

A black and a white picture from an exhibition called "Good News for Modern Man" in 1994 for about \$300-400. It was in my friend's loft that we turned into a gallery.

What's the weirdest thing you ever saw happen in a museum or gallery?

A V.I.P. section at an opening.

What's your art-world pet peeve?

Too much work made for the art world and not enough work made for the real world.

What's your favorite post-gallery watering hole or restaurant?

Anywhere my friends are going.

Do you have a gallery/museum-going routine?

I love to see art and it's always fun for me to get away and wander galleries and museums whenever I can.

Know any good jokes?

I forget proper jokes. I appreciate life's unscripted funny moments. That's what makes me laugh.

What's the last great book you read?

"Your Needs Met" by Jack Addington.

What work of art do you wish you owned?

The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

What would you do to get it?

Fuck the Pope.

What international art destination do you most want to visit?

Easter Island.