

FRED TORRES COLLABORATIONS

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Tears, Flowers and Muses at David LaChapelle Opening

During the opening of David LaChapelle's new exhibition, "Earth Laughs in Flowers," at Fred Torres Collaborations last Thursday, a woman was crying and shaking slightly in the back room. Between sobs, the woman, a photographer named Katrina Eugenia, talked to Mr. LaChapelle, who was wearing a porkpie hat and a striped shirt.

"I'm an enormous fan," she said after Mr. LaChapelle disappeared, "and I'm just overwhelmed to be here." She wiped away a tear. Mr. LaChapelle returned, bearing a catalog from the show, and wrote a long note to her. "This is Norman Mailer's son," she said, turning to John Buffalo Mailer, who was in a black leather jacket.

There was a large text written on the wall behind them, entitled "Gaia." It was a blurb purportedly about the "primordial earth goddess," written in the first person. "Have we poisoned what gives us life?" it asked. "Are we the guilty exploiters, the rapist?" On an adjacent wall there was an enormous photograph by Mr. LaChapelle of a nude woman covered in moss lying supine on a grassy landscape holding a sprig of pink flowers over her crotch. She looks

either dead or in ecstasy.

The opening was for a series of still lifes of flowers and human detritus by Mr. LaChapelle, a new turn for the photographer, who is known for racy, garishly colored fashion and celebrity portraits.

"I don't think it's a departure," he told Gallerist of his new work. "I stopped doing celebrity fashion in 2006 to make a home in Hawaii, where I live today. And then I got asked to show at galleries again, and I just embraced that new option." He spoke slowly and sincerely. "But it was where I originally began, showing at galleries in New York. They're the same ideas that I was dealing with as a kid in the '80s."

The room was so crowded that you could hardly see the

artwork. In some cases, as with all of Mr. LaChapelle's happenings, the crowd itself could have been fodder for one of his shoots. The photographer's muse, downtown nightlife queen Amanda Lepore, was standing with her clubbing compatriot Baby Jane, a petite woman in an elaborate red dress and meringuelike headpiece.

"He always liked to take me apart," said Ms. Lepore about what it was like to be photographed by Mr. LaChapelle, "and put me back together with a make-up artist."

Daphne Guinness was wearing glittering chrome epaulets. "Daphne's such a creative person," said Patrick Toolan, an artist liaison with the gallery, of the beer heirless. "She appreciates beauty