

# FRED TORRES COLLABORATIONS

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

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Review: David LaChapelle, "From Darkness to Light"  
The star photog shines at Lever House.

Article by Paul Laster



David LaChapelle, Chain of Life, detail  
Photograph: Garret Suhrie

Best known for his surreal celebrity portraits, startling fashion spreads and theatrical rock videos, David LaChapelle cut his teeth in New York's downtown art scene—showing at edgy galleries, such as 303, 56 Bleecker and Tomoko Liguori—long before he achieved commercial success. Once he became a sensation in the magazine and music worlds, higher-profile galleries started exhibiting his unique brand of provocative photography, which opened the door for an escape from advertising and a return to fine art. In 2006, he bought a farm in Hawaii and hung up his commercial camera, for the most part: He still takes on such glam jobs as photographing Lady Gaga for the cover of Rolling Stone.

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At Lever House, LaChapelle comes full circle, with an installation that resurrects work addressing the AIDS crisis from his 1991 Liguori show, while mixing it with his current interest in contemporary allegories. Two large circular pieces, adhered directly to the lobby gallery's windows, present hundreds of cutouts: tinted images of nude models, identified as Adam and Eve, metaphorically swimming under a giant microscope. Chain of Life links 14,000 torn-and-stapled photographs of nudes, shifting from shades of light to dark red, as hanging chains that traverse the room. Meanwhile, the massive collage The Raft fantastically riffs on Théodore Géricault's 1819 painting The Raft of the Medusa, which depicts struggling survivors of a shipwreck. Constructed by cutting, tearing and gluing staged photos together with found materials, The Raft—along with the other works in this crafty show—reveals LaChapelle at his creative best.