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LaChapelle & Robilant+Voena
Three appointments to retrace the path of an iconoclast photographer

By Cesare Cunaccia



An exhibition divided into three parts - London, Milan and St. Moritz (in collaboration with St. Moritz Art Masters) all, however, focusing on the most recent production of the celebrated American photographer David LaChapelle, born in 1963. The shows are produced by the metaphoric art dealer duo Robilant+Voena, which floats between old masters and contemporary art (they're based in Milan and London). On view in the British capital at 38 Dover Street from February 14th to March 24th 2012 and in Milan at Via Fontana 16 from February 16th to March 24th of next year. And, finally, in St. Moritz, at the Reformierte Dorfkirche in Maistra, from February 11th to February 26th.

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Titled *Earth Laughs in Flowers*, this exhibition consists of 10 works of different dimensions, glazed C-prints shot from 2008 to 2011, which revisit the foundations of seventeenth-century art, in particular the Flemish tradition, but also, for example, the mastery of Mario "de' Fiori" of the Roman baroque period and his floral still life. David LaChapelle has given life to opulent images, rich with brilliant, vibrant colors, which appear to be elsewhere, filtered, misty with a vanitas surface sensation, a meditation on the natural disintegration of things. Rich floral compositions of roses, mega-colorful baroque-looking tulips, lilies and calla lilies, which, in their own right, turn into convectors of the history of painting, dancing between their own beauty and the melancholy necessity of death.

At the bases of the vases and flower arrangements lay allegoric objects, sophisticated as well as prosaic, as well as citations from pop consumerism, memento mori, symbolic fruit and vegetables, candomblé candles on a kitsch gâteau d'anniversaire in the shape of a heart, a mask à la Murakami, canned sausages, vinyl toy guns in neon colors, anthropomorphic lighters in chrome metal that you can buy on the street, cell phones and anatomic parts, a popular tabloid that narrates the battle between Michael Jackson and his ex-wife for the custody of their children. Last night's vernissage was packed, a heterogenous mix, very LaChapelle. The show was hosted by the beautiful Milanese gallery Robilant+Voena of via Fontana 16, where the works engaged in a dialogue with the marvelous paintings of the XVII century, with ancient Roman objects and curiosities.

LaChapelle, hat on head, eternally easy-going Connecticut boy, seemed to be having lots of fun. He was relaxed and, laughing, signed the catalogues brought to him, sometimes even offering up elaborate graphic compositions or a personalized poem for the ecstatic admirer. Then, a private dinner, a single long table in a lodge facing the Duomo, orchestrated by Giacomo Arengario, full of "Flemish" frayed tulips and candlelight. Those who attended, above all the contemporary art addicted, include Antonella Camerana, Franco and Umberta Gussalli Beretta, the sophisticatedly alluring Alessandra Facchinetti, Maily Zegna, Fabio and the intense Candela Novembre, the photographer Alessandro Belgiojoso with wife and colleague Albertina D'Urso, Marta Brivio Sforza, Paola Giubergia, Luisa Beccaria, Anna Gabetti Teteur, Paola Manfrin.

The 16-year old daughter of Marco Voena, Virginia, really stood out in her beauty. Tonight, there will be a repeat in Endagina, with a parterre des rois and guests will include Naomi Campbell, George Livanos, Peter Brandt with Stephanie Seymour and Maximilian Fürstenberg. Also expected are the Indian tycoons Mittal.