

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 22, 2010

David LaChapelle
At Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York
July 13 – September 18, 2010

“AMERICAN JESUS” to feature new works such as a trio of photographs depicting Michael Jackson as a religious icon and martyr and an allegorical photograph of the “Rape of Africa”



American Jesus, David LaChapelle’s solo exhibition at Paul Kasmin Gallery, and his most recent solo show in New York since 2008, will be on view from July 13 through September 18, 2010.

LaChapelle draws on an immense lexicon of art historical references, current events, and popular culture, to make visually compelling images each unique in their narrative and evocative content.

Shown for the first time in New York is part of a series which began over a decade ago including three large-scale photographs depicting Michael Jackson as a modern day martyr. Of all of the subjects LaChapelle has portrayed, Jackson unquestionably lived one of the most epic and dramatic lives of our time. Such sentiment is shown with biblical connotations and is hauntingly represented in these images.

In addition, LaChapelle presents *Thy Kingdom Come*, a look at the results of greed and corruption amongst religious establishment.

Also making its New York debut is *The Rape Of Africa*, a monumental artwork inspired by Sandro Botticelli’s *Venus & Mars* of 1484. The well-known allegorical work depicts the poised and beautiful Venus, goddess of love, having tamed and diffused Mars, the vengeful god of war, who soundly sleeps, while small cherub figures play with Mars’ instruments of warfare. Here LaChapelle subverts the meaning of the original work by proposing a black Venus, striking in her beauty, yet completely powerless to both her treatment as property, and to the destruction of her land through mining and war depicted in the background. The Mars in this image is not sleeping as much as satiated by his own victories, sitting on top of his plunder gained by conquests. LaChapelle’s contemporary allegory is densely layered with poignant and symbolic imagery, as seen in the jarring combination of young children with deadly weapons, or the gilded human bone

resting under the finger of Mars. Alongside the photograph will be studies for the work, illuminating LaChapelle's studies in the traditional medium of drawing and watercolor.

LaChapelle's photographs typically begin with a series of compositional graphite drawings, collages, watercolors, and mixed media sketches—a little known facet of his artistic process. This exhibition will allow viewers the opportunity to examine LaChapelle's artistic process, from conception to the completed works.

David LaChapelle's work has been exhibited internationally at museums and institutions including the Museo de las Artes, Guadalajara; the Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, Mexico City; his first show in Asia at the MOCA, Taipei; the Tel Aviv Museum of Art; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA); The National Portrait Gallery, London; The Helmut Newton Foundation, Berlin; The Brandhorst Museum, Munich; and the Kunsthau Wien, Vienna. His artwork is included in multiple international private and public collections.

Image credit:

The Beatification: I'll never let you part, for you're always in my heart

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