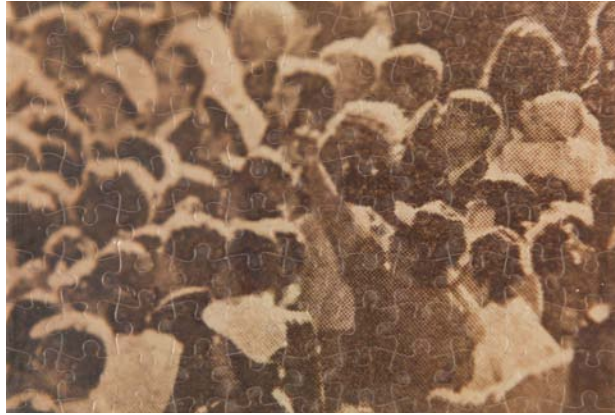


The Real World

18 May–31 July 2021

5–6/F, H Queen's, 80 Queen's Road Central
Hong Kong



Felix Gonzalez-Torres, "Untitled", 1987
Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present *The Real World*, a group exhibition that will feature paintings, sculptures, and installations from the 1990s and early 2000s by gallery artists Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Raymond Pettibon, Jason Rhoades, Diana Thater, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Lisa Yuskavage. On view across two floors of the gallery's Hong Kong location, the selected works exemplify the groundbreaking and alternative approaches these artists pursued in their respective practices as they emerged as major artistic influences within the New York and Los Angeles art worlds.

Working in a variety of media—from painting and drawing to video and installation—these artists each critically reevaluated the status of their materials and challenged the relationship between art and everyday life by incorporating nontraditional subjects, formats, and ideas into the composition and experience of their work. Responding to growing social concerns that had long been suppressed or overlooked, these artists pioneered approaches to art making that address questions of identity, gender, sexuality, consumerism, and the status of the built and natural environment. Several of the featured artists were among the first to exhibit with David Zwirner, where some of their pioneering and iconic installations and works debuted at the gallery's original location at 43 Greene Street, New York, which opened its doors in 1993. Presented today against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, these artists' engagements with the social dimensions of art—whether in the form of the active participation of the viewer or through the shared language of everyday experiences, objects, and cultural references—feel all the more relevant and necessary.

The gallery's upper floor will feature Los Angeles-based artist Diana Thater's (b. 1962) seminal 1998 image and video installation *The Caucus Race*. Since the early 1990s, Thater has created groundbreaking films, videos, and installations, the primary theme of which is the tension between the natural environment and mediated reality. Many of Thater's works explore the temporal qualities of video and its capacity to construct perception and shape the way we think about the world. *The Caucus Race* exemplifies the artist's ability to integrate image and architecture so as to create immersive and engaging installations that activate the physical space in which they are presented. In this work, text and video are projected onto two walls with four video monitors placed on the floor in the gallery space. The work begins with a text from a scene in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) that describes a chaotic animal race, which is projected one word at a time onto the gallery wall. After the text concludes, clips of animals play on the monitors arranged on the ground, ending with a large projection of a video

looking down at a pool of water as a dolphin leaps upward toward the camera before diving back downward.

Complementing Thater's meditations on nature and humanity's fragmented relationship to it is a selection of sculptures by Jason Rhoades (1965–2006), including *Chandelier 39* and *Chandelier 32* (2006), a unique work composed of neon lights and found materials. Rhoades emerged in the 1990s as one of the most formally and conceptually rigorous artists of his time. During his short but prolific career, he became known for highly original, large-scale sculptural installations, which incorporate various materials inspired by Los Angeles car culture and his upbringing in rural Northern California as well as by a mixture of historical and contemporary global and regional influences that he explored throughout his life. Originally included in the artist's large immersive installation *Tijuanatanjierchandelier* (2006), the chandelier-like sculpture addresses the conditions of consumerism and global tourism that have come to dramatically shape the physical environment. The use of language was central to Rhoades's practice, and prominent within the sculpture are Spanish and English euphemisms and slang words for "vagina," rendered as glowing neon signs that are at once elevatory, transgressive, misogynist, and comically absurd.

The presentation on the lower level will include a gallery with a focused installation of works by Felix Gonzalez-Torres (1957–1996). One of the most significant artists to emerge in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Gonzalez-Torres employed simple, everyday materials in his work, including stacks of paper, puzzles, candy, strings of lights, and strands of beads. His evocative work, which purposefully references the languages of minimalism and conceptualism, resonates with meaning that is at once specific and mutable, rigorous and generous, poetic and political. Among the artist's works that will be presented is "*Untitled*" (*Ross in L.A.*) (1991), one of his paper stacks. The large sheets of paper that make up the manifestation of this work each contain a metallic silver rectangle printed on their surface. Viewers may take individual sheets from the stack, which in turn can be replenished by the exhibitor. A selection of photographic jigsaw puzzles that Gonzalez-Torres produced as editions between 1987 and 1992 will also be displayed on the gallery's walls. These works speak to Gonzalez-Torres's interest in commercial and readily available production methods as well as questions about how to imbue emotionality, political content, and personal experience within unconventional formats that remain at a disconnect from the artist's hand. As with his paper stacks, the puzzles exemplify Gonzalez-Torres's sensitivity to the fragment and the whole, presence and absence.

Also on view on the lower floor will be Rirkrit Tiravanija's (b. 1961) *untitled 1990 (pad thai)*, which will mark the first presentation of the artist's work at David Zwirner since the recent announcement that the gallery will be working with him in Asia. Tiravanija is best known for his intimate, participatory installations that revolve around personal and shared communal traditions, such as cooking authentic Thai meals, that are, in the words of curator Rochelle Steiner, "fundamentally about bringing people together."¹ At the forefront of the shift in avant-garde art practices in the 1990s away from traditional art objects and toward "relational aesthetics" that incorporate diverse cultural spaces, practices, and temporalities, Tiravanija has continually challenged and expanded the social dimension of art, inviting people from all walks of life to inhabit the special and personal spaces that he constructs and to communally engage in shared rituals and actions. A seminal and early piece by Tiravanija, *untitled 1990 (pad thai)* was first presented at the Paula Allen Gallery, New York, in 1990. It was the artist's first live participatory installation and involved him preparing and serving food to visitors and then gathering the remnants of the meal as evidence of the event. In Hong Kong, the work will be activated with Tiravanija's pad thai recipe prepared on site and served to visitors with the remnants gathered from the meal. The public is invited to make a reservation to attend the activation by visiting the David Zwirner website.

On the gallery walls surrounding *untitled 1990 (pad thai)* will be a large-scale installation of work by Raymond Pettibon (b. 1957) from the 1990s. Intermixing image and text, Pettibon's drawings address a wide spectrum of American iconography pulled from literature, art history, philosophy, religion, politics,

¹ Quoted in Calvin Tomkins, "Shall We Dance?," *The New Yorker* (October 17, 2005), p. 82.

sports, and alternative youth culture, among other sources. His work engages the visual rhetorics of pop and commercial culture while incorporating language from mass media as well as classic texts by writers such as William Blake, Marcel Proust, John Ruskin, and Walt Whitman. Pettibon's drawings from the 1990s, a formative period for the artist, speak to the growing disillusionment with capital markets, the collapse of American idealism, and lingering anxieties from the Cold War. The installation of these works in Hong Kong will be presented in cloud-like clusters, creating a frenetic network of imagery and visual and textual references that mirrors the artist's own working process.

Concluding the exhibition will be a seminal, early painting by Lisa Yuskavage (b. 1962) titled *Big Marie* (1993). Over the past thirty years, Yuskavage has challenged and expanded the parameters of painting and portraiture through a singular visual practice that blends traditional and contemporary painterly techniques and ideas with a unique and studied sensitivity and treatment of color and figuration. In her portraits, Yuskavage combines personal, art-historical, and pop-cultural references as well as iconography to conjure vast, enigmatic and constructed worlds featuring highly sexualized or erotized subjects rendered in the artist's distinctive manneristic style. *Big Marie* belongs to the artist's *Babies* series, a major group of works begun in the early 1990s. The works in this series depict young, often nude women, who are constructs of the artist's imagination, in the center of the composition, their erotized bodies seemingly materializing from brightly colored, monochrome mist—in this case tones of green. To achieve the immersion of figure and field, Yuskavage adapts the Renaissance technique of sfumato, in which different hues and gradations of a color are shaded gradually into one another, softening the outlines of forms. As with her portraiture practice more broadly, *Big Marie* simultaneously engages with art-historical precedents while also stripping away and exposing the conventions and traditions of the genre.

For all press inquiries, contact

Julia Lukacher +1 212 727 2070 jlukacher@davidzwirner.com

Victoria Kung +852 9668 1092 victoriak@suttoncomms.com

Tong Hu +852 9769 4819 tong@davidzwirner.com

Kiko Tse +852 60155184 kiko@davidzwirner.com