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Las Vegas
Jeff Burton

Nearly three decades following his inaugural 1995 exhibition at Casey Kaplan, Jeff Burton presents his eighth solo show, *Las Vegas*, with a series of eight new photographs portraying the "city of sin" through a candy-colored lens. Burton omits the "Strip" and instead focuses his distinctive eye towards the performances of the city to render the site hyperreal. Included is a compellingly lifelike mannequin's profile in Vegas' famed Showgirl Museum, Cirque du Soleil performers suspended in both air and water, an intimate moment between an Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) fighter and his trainer, and a pair of tourists captured in an act of poolside respite, a temporary divergence from daily life. Resuming the role of voyeur he first assumed shooting stills on adult film sets, Burton utilizes an extravagant setting to center the dually sensational and artificial nature of the Las Vegas landscape.

Burton has always engaged with blurring distinctions between fine art and commercial practices, reveling in the two seemingly separate spheres' shared themes of desire and converging perceptions of high and low culture. His unconventional image-making combined with relationships within the fashion industry (including shooting campaigns for Yves Saint Laurent, Tom Ford, Kris Van Assche and Cartier, along with contributing to French Vogue, Vanity Fair, and the New York Times) spawned an invitation by Louis Vuitton to produce a book for their *Fashion Eye* series, which highlights a city, a region, or a country through the gaze of a renowned photographer. Past installments include the legendary work of Cecil Beaton, Guy Bourdin, Peter Lindbergh, and Helmut Newton. In keeping with the *Fashion Eye* tradition, Burton's volume first appears to function as a travel log, however, he eclipses vacation imagery in favor of his singular universe of the in-between. In this established visual universe, fantasy and reality blend as Burton's glamorous, staged gestures flirt with visceral emotional realities.

Fountains, Bellagio 1206 captures a hypnotic bird's eye view of a ringed explosion of water emanating from the Bellagio Hotel fountains. Recalling Busby Berkeley, Burton excludes the edges of the ellipse, creating an abstracted, floating composition that belies the functionality of the machine. Burton repeats this formalistic decision in *O, Cirque du Soleil, Bellagio, synchronized swimmers*. Here, a group of synchronized swimmers appears limitless within a pattern of identical legs in motion. A hand extends upward in vigorous desire—a poignant capture between lens and performer. Expertly documented, this fleeting and carnal moment underscores the emotional charge and vulnerability within a systematic routine performance, harking back to images Burton created on porn sets early in his practice.

Meanwhile, Las Vegas North, Dustin Poirier vs. Conor McGregor shows the cityscape at dusk; at a distance, the nearby Sheep Mountain Range is seen in contrast with a projection of a UFC fight on the glass facade of the Las Vegas Hilton Hotel. The distance between the viewer and participant created by the featured artificial screen underscores themes of performance and lust for sensation that permeate the entire body of work. With a cinematic view of Las Vegas, Burton poses that desire can be a glorious itch left unscratched.