

Nate Lowman

Delusion Horizon

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MASSIMODECARLO is pleased to announce *Delusion Horizon*, a new solo exhibition of paintings by American artist Nate Lowman. As an artist, Lowman makes paintings about the power of images, collecting and translating them from propaganda films, advertisements, art history, and other forms of mass media.

In *Delusion Horizon*, Lowman's new collection of images analyzes and deciphers the experience of seeing. Some images capture intense, cataclysmic moments of rupture: the mushroom clouds of atom bombs, a volcano, or a spy balloon exploding. Others depict banalities imbued with a sense of magic or the uncanny: a cruise ship hovers amid a mirage on the horizon; a rainbow of candy-colored tractor trailers park at a distribution center. In this exhibition, Lowman bathes the images, with the exception of one, in the uncanny cold of uberblue daylight. The viewer, and, in turn, the painter, gaze out at an artificially-lit landscape. The works exert a tension between skill and deskilling: Lowman paints on raw linen, letting the pigments soak into the work's support. From a distance, Lowman's paintings are flat, faithfully rendered images. Up close, the shapes and lines, like the best Helen Frankenthaler paintings, begin to dissolve and bleed.

Lowman's paintings traffic in the visual signifiers that define contemporary American life. In *Priscilla*, we become cold, distanced observers to a moment of immense power - the detonation of an atom bomb in the Nevada desert. We stand, kilometers back, from an orange-tinged mushroom cloud, which burns against the stark, blue, alien landscape. Born in Las Vegas, Lowman has intimate familiarity with the history of nuclear testing in the American desert. The source image for *Priscilla* was produced by Lookout Mountain Air Force Station, a group of Hollywood-based cinematographers and photographers who were tasked with the documentation of nuclear tests at the Nevada Test site. As a still, "Priscilla," the codename of this 1957 nuclear test, advanced the mid-century image of America's military force. As a painting, Lowman's *Priscilla* becomes a new picturesque, and a perverse, yet idealized image of the American landscape.

If *Priscilla* is about the sheer power of images, then *Distribution Center* functions as a metaphor for their circulation and consumption. Viewers witness a horizon line of colorful tractor-trailers, placidly docked at a warehouse near an American port, awaiting the intake of commodities. A sense of flatness permeates the gold, blue, and red rectangles, resulting in an elongated vignette of contemporary life that could be anywhere and nowhere. Devoid of people, except the implied viewer, the painting is a snapshot of the industrial sublime, emphasizing the idea of networked globalization.

In *Delusion Horizon*, Lowman imbues all his paintings with visual noise - scribbles, printing errors, and defects that result through the artist's creative process. After Lowman selects his images, he subjects them to a process of degeneration, running the chosen pictures through photocopiers until their resolution lowers and they amass glitches. In some paintings, the defects become like comedic graffiti, overemphasizing the bomb blasts, be they American or Soviet. In others, like *Cruise Mirage*, they become droplets of visual information that cloud our view of this icon of leisure. Our experience of the world is always mediated, interfered with, and edited. In what can also be viewed as another "picturesque" scene of Arcadian vacation, the cruise ship hovers over the horizon line, appearing to float over the ocean. Yet, what might be an aspirational ideal to some is also a banality to others. A reference to the exhibition's title, the mirage, experienced from a distance, emphasizes how vision is also an act of both perception and deception.

Lowman's portrait of the Detroit techno DJ and producer Jeff Mills becomes a visual coda for the exhibition. It is a more personal image, bathed in the glow of red and purple light, as Lowman places us viewers next to the decks, just a few feet from Mills. This image of Mills, Lowman's childhood hero and a legendary voice in electronic music, is a painting of Americana all its own. Swirling with the energy of Mills' music, this work sets in relief Lowman's other paintings through a sense of warmth and intimacy. Through this inverted closeness, the painting underscores just how distanced and alienated we are from observed reality.

The exhibition's paintings concern the images that America produces about itself. How do we, as viewers, understand ourselves in relation to that narrative? Lowman's paintings emphasize the shrinking of the world through the constant distribution of information. And in the world of Lowman's paintings, images are agents of power and change that define us, but, ultimately, cannot be trusted.

— Owen Duffy

Nate Lowman

Nate Lowman was born in Las Vegas in 1979. He lives and works in New York.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Let's Go* at David Zwirner, New York, in 2022. The artist's work was the subject of a solo exhibition at Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, in 2018.

Other recent solo presentations at public institutions include those at the Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2017); FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France (2016); Dallas Contemporary, Texas (2015); The Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, Connecticut (2012); Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst, Oslo (2009); and Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota (2006).

The artist's work has also been featured in significant group exhibitions including *A Possible Horizon*, de la Cruz Collection, Miami (2020); *Third Dimension: Works from The Brant Foundation*, The Brant Foundation, New York (2019); *Storylines: Contemporary Art at the Guggenheim*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2015); *Second Chances*, Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2015); *Themes & Variations: The Empire of Light*, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice (2014); *Three Blind Mice*, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium (2014); *To Be With Art Is All We Ask*, Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst, Oslo (2012); *George Herms: Xenophilia (Love of the Unknown)*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2011); *The Luminous Interval: The D. Daskalopoulos Collection*, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain (2011); *The Last Newspaper*, New Museum, New York (2010); *Fresh Hell*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2010); *Off the Wall: Part 1 – Thirty Performative Actions*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2010); and *Haunted: Contemporary Photography/ Video/ Performance*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2010).

Work by Lowman is held in numerous public collections including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles; The Metropolitan Museum

of Art, New York; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.