



THE VIOLET CRAB AT DRAF

06.02.15 — 02.05.15

1865 – Café Royal opens in Regent Street, London
1915 – The Moulin Rouge is destroyed by fire; Cabaret Voltaire is created in Zurich
1965 – Liza Minnelli makes her debut on Broadway
2015 – The Violet Crab at DRAF opens in Camden, London...

The Violet Crab at DRAF looks to cabaret past and present in new commissions, live acts, loans and works from the David Roberts Collection, taking residence in an extravagant mise-en-scene designed and directed by artist Than Hussein Clark. The Violet Crab at DRAF takes cabaret as a situation for queering the inscriptions of time and space.

“The white cube of the gallery must no longer be so terrified of the black box of the theatre. Turning the spatial and temporal architectures of exhibition-making upside down, cabaret provides a narrative framework in which to rearrange hierarchies between subject and object and performance. I think here of a series of protagonists: Kander & Ebb, two Jewish homosexuals who gleefully pen a new fascist anthem two-thirds of the way through their score for the musical Cabaret; Christopher Isherwood and WH Auden, on whose lucky escape to the musical and sexual underworld of Weimar the same musical was based; and the French Fumistes without whose radical disdain for order the erotic incoherencies of Weimar would have never been possible. So like *The Black Cat* before it, *The Violet Crab at DRAF* opens its doors to questions of how the erotic, the melodramatic, and the tragic might satirise the rules of production in the present.” Than Hussein Clark

Than Hussein Clark dramatically reconfigures the structures and architecture of the gallery – from furniture (stages, tables, mirrors, curtains and screens) to concierge to printed matter. The exhibition spaces become cloakroom, bar, stage, backstage and shadow theatre to explore the dynamics of subject and object, attitude and identity. Commissions by other artists include murals by Allison Katz and Shaan Tariq Hassan-Syed, flower arrangement sculptures by Carter Mull, a video by Luiz Roque, with loans from iconic designers Claude and François Xavier Lalanne, a selection of paintings by Anj Smith and works by Cindy Sherman.

Over sixty artworks from the David Roberts Collection are present, across different media – ceramics, photography, design, sculpture, painting – made between 1899 and the present day by artists ranging from iconic figures Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein to little-known outsider artists.

CLOAKROOM

Between 1973 and 1975 American photographer **SUSAN MEISELAS** spent her summers photographing and interviewing women who performed striptease for small town carnivals in New England, Pennsylvania and South Carolina, also interviewing their boyfriends, the show managers and paying customers. Taken just prior to Meiselas association with Magnum Photos, images from the series appeared in the book *Carnival Strippers* (1976). While the book's first edition was deemed "depressing though definitely illuminating" by American critics, the second included essays by Sylvia Wolf and Deirdre English on the importance of this body of work within the history of photography and the history of feminism. The works included in the exhibition were purchased from Atlas Gallery, London in 2006.

Nana Danseuse (circa 1972) by the late French artist **NIKI DE SAINT-PHALLE** is a sculpture in painted polyester on an iron base by her ex-husband Jean Tinguely notably featured in the 1972 film *Daddy*. This project was the result of a collaboration between Saint-Phalle and the distinguished filmmaker Peter Whitehead, one of the great chroniclers of the 1960s. In this film, Saint-Phalle explored through fantastical sequences of nightmare and wish-fulfillment her abuse as a child at the hands of her father. Daddy was imbued with a glamorous yet hallucinatory vision, dream-like montages involving the various characters and actors in various acts that would ultimately lead to the father's death at the daughter's hands. For her, the film was intended as an act of catharsis, allowing her to attack the memory of her dead father. But within this context, the figure of Nana therefore appears as a jarring contrast, an angel of innocence in comparison to the dark depths of the soul that the film explored. By her own account, Saint-Phalle herself was tainted in her own ability to accept her womanhood and her body by her abuse and her convent education. Nana shows her dismissing any shame that she felt, creating an image of woman that is both maternal and sexual.

BAR

The masterpiece of furniture design *Hippopotame II (bar)* 1976, made of bronze, inox, copper and wood was produced in an edition of 8 by the late French designer **FRANÇOIS-XAVIER LALANNE** who also custom designed a bar for Yves St Laurent, created a hippopotamus bathtub in blue polyester resin for Teeny and Marcel Duchamp in 1968-9, and has his rhinoceros desk *Rhinocretaire* featured in LIFE magazine in 1976. Stating that "The animal world constitutes the richest and most varied forms on the planet," he incorporated rhinos, hippos, alligators, apes, monkeys, bulls, bears, hares, chickens, sheep into his sculptures and furniture. This work is kindly on loan from the private collection of Ben Brown. Francois also worked with his wife Claude (b.1924, Paris, France), known collectively as 'Les Lalannes'. Claude's delicate bronze chairs *Chaise Feuilles Bamboo (Gauche)* and *Chaise Feuilles Bamboo (Droite)* 2009/2010 [Located in the VIP LOUNGE at positions 6 and 12] reflect the floral motifs of Art Nouveau.

English/Pakistani Toronto-born artist **SHAAN TARIQ HASSAN-SYED**'s practice deals with notions of representation and ideals of purity within painting. The artist's first mural, commissioned specifically for The Violet Crab at DRAF, employs a motif that points to several things at once; a simplified landscape, Victorian stage design, the edge of a vaudeville stage set, a cartoon vision of a hanging curtain or the extended perimeter of a shop awning. The swipes of absent colour appear as a rhythmic intervention in the otherwise solid monochrome of the mural; a series of movements that may act as moments of reveal.

MAIN STAGE

Spending part of her childhood in Italy and currently based between Italy and London, **EMILY YOUNG**'s work continues the legacy of *non finito* sculpture in which unworked areas foreground the natural qualities of the stone. Made in materials such as Purbeck green marble, patinated Bronze, Lapis Lazuli, Monteone Onyx the works range from 25cm to *Archangel I* (2004), one of her most ambitious, at over a metre long and weighing nearly a tonne. These works from The Fine Art Society entered the collection between 2000 and 2006.

A strong presence on the stage, a large figure capped in a stylised eardrum motif grimaces into a grey void, in Italian artist **ENRICO DAVID**'s *Untitled*, 2013. Also on display, the artist's bronzes and mixed media works *After Birth 1* and *Room for Small Head* (both 2013)[located in the Cloakroom at positions 8 and 12 and in the VIP lounge at position 9] present abstracted forms. Referencing theatre, performance, theatrical display and folk art, these anthropomorphic constructions convey surreal narratives. The works were acquired from Michael Werner Gallery in 2013.

London-based Canadian artist **ALISON KATZ**'s commissioned murals punctuate the space, with black and white noses and feet recurring in the doorway into the bar, on the backstage door, (on which hangs Roy Lichtenstein's woodcut *Nude in the Woods* (1980) and William N Copley's *Untitled Blue Couple* (1974)), touching the main stage. Working several years ago from live models, Katz's figures have lent increasingly towards composition and adornment. Incorporating a nose motif, a shape that also appears in pear and strawberry patterns in recent works, she uses leftover spaces around doorways, hybrid between painting a wall and painting a picture. The large grisaille mural shows the curved back of a crouched female nude, taken from a bronze public sculpture, who turns to look over her left shoulder. Here, her head has been replaced or overlaid with a blank white sphere, painted with a spiral, that equally suggests a full moon.

ANDRE DE DIENES was a photographer for Esquire, Vogue, LIFE and one of the first, and perhaps most renowned, photographers of Marilyn Monroe, "nurturing an idea of the feminine ideal". At the time of their meeting going by the name of Norma Jean Baker, he remembers Monroe as "earthly, sexy-looking angel! Sent expressly for me!" These images were taken between 1945 and 1950, during which time Marilyn was dropped by Columbia and Fox, signed with MGM and then later picked up again by Fox. With simple titles such as *Marilyn*, *Distressed*, *Marilyn Praying (Tobey Beach)*, *Cowgirl*, *turning*, *In Snow*, and *Marilyn in Bookshop*, they suggest a porousness between persona and character, during a transitional period in the actresses' life. The works were purchased from Atlas Gallery in 2005.

German artist **HANS BELLMER** first created the doll that is the subject of much of his work in 1932. A series of UNTITLED photographs between 1934-7 placed the life-sized toy in various scenarios and settings. Bellmer hand-tinted his images, giving them a surreal light that in this photograph, taken in 1936, emphasises the odd shapes of the doll's body and her missing limbs. The imagery of the staircase re-occurs in other works from this period such as in Eadweard Muybridge's early experiments with film and in Marcel Duchamp's famous painting *Nude Descending a Staircase*. Whereas Duchamp and Muybridge capture the movement of the figure on the stairs, Bellmer's doll is still, almost appearing to be sleeping. The work came to the collection from Galerie 1900-2000, Paris in 2012.

ANDY WARHOL's voyeuristic interest in the male body is evident in his early line drawings of young men from the mid to late 1950s, many of which were included in his 'Drawings for a Boy Book' exhibition at the Bodley Gallery, New York in 1956. Influenced by Jean Cocteau and particularly the book *Dessins* (Paris: Stock 1924), the drawings were largely produced in ball point pen. The heart motif in *Head of Boy with Fingers and Heart at Lips*, 1956 also features in a number of the drawings in the Boy Book drawings, a larger version was a common part of Warhol's signature. This work was acquired from Christies in 2006.

BACKSTAGE

American photographer **MARILYN MINTER'S** close-up photograph *Split* 2003 was first exhibited at Fredericks Freiser in New York alongside a series of hyperrealist paintings portraying decadently embellished lips, eyes, and toes. In *Runs* 2006, presented at the 73rd Annual Whitney Biennial, mud meets haute-couture to capture, in the words of the artist, the "moment when everything goes wrong... when the model sweats [when] there's lipstick on teeth and the makeup's running." Both works came to the collection in 2006 from Salon 94, New York.

Backstage, a series of framed polaroids from the 1980's by **HELMUT NEWTON**. Newton carried at all times in his camera bag: a monocle, a cigarette holder and false nipples, displaying the childhood influence of Weimar Germany and the "situations of control, submission, and virile posing found in Nazi aesthetics." Primarily a test medium at the time, polaroids were produced as guides before the artist shot a subject on film: some of these particular images gave birth to the 1981 "Doppelganger" pictures in which models display mannequin-like passivity. Each named simply after its subject and setting, such as *Nude Standing on a Balcony* and *Woman and Mirror*, the polaroids came to the collection in 2007 from Atlas Gallery. *SUMO*, 1999, a signed artist's book which took three years and ten million Deutschmarks to produce, breaking records for its size and weight, is displayed on an embossed Philippe Starck designed stand in the Shadow Theatre at position 3.

VIP LOUNGE

Influenced by American and Mexican folk realism and a precursor to Pop Art, American artist **WILLIAM COPLEY** also owned one of the finest collections of Surrealist works in America. Part of the exhibition *X-Rated* at Sadie Coles HQ, London in 2011, in which pornographic scenes are depicted in a collision of geometric pattern and the organic figuration. Painted in a naïve style, *Untitled Blue Couple, 1974* depicts a completely engrossed couple locked in a sexual position known in Ancient Rome as *more ferarum*, or "in the manner of wild beasts."

Perpetua, 2010 by **JOANA VASCONCELOS** was part of her 2010 exhibition *I Will Survive* at Haunch of Venison, London. A statue in concrete, acrylic paint and handmade cotton crochet presents the figure of Perpetua, a 3rd century martyr from Carthage. The handmade mannequin is encased in intricate finely detailed crochet - a traditional Portuguese craft usually associated with female makers. She holds a bloom of "Félicité et Perpétue", a rambling rose with pale pink buds, which was named after the martyr in 1828. The work came to the collection in 2011 from Haunch of Venison.

SHADOW THEATRE

Nearly 5 metres in diameter and adorned with 1,250 mirror polished leaves, Scottish artist **CHARLES AVERY**'s *Untitled (Tree no 2 for the Jadingadendar)*, 2012 in aluminium, silver plated nickel and hammerite is part of the extensive *The Islanders* project. Comprised of drawings and sculptural works by the self-taught artist made since 2004, this ongoing series describes the society of an imaginary island. Combining the museological and imaginary, Avery's world-building is neither completely immersive nor completely illustrative, but rather a hybrid design. The meticulously calculated 'weeping' tree was purchased from Grimm Gallery in 2012.

THAN HUSSEIN CLARK's *Shadow Theatre* is inspired by Henri Riviere's stage at the Chat Noir, Paris. Replacing marionettes as a popular form of entertainment in France in the 1700s, the form, originally known as *ombres chinoises* (or 'Chinese shadows') was developed by Francois Domanique Seraphin and extended on by Riviere. At the Chat Noir "a theatre more than 10m high is concealed behind a stage measuring 1m2 at the sides. Right at the heart of the production, the light from a blowtorch illuminates the screen from a distance of 3m. A sliding channel with multiple grooves allows the rotation of two-way mirrors depicting skies and landscapes: some plays use up to 150 mirrors and 12 stage hands!" Clark's shadow theatre is made of PVC, perspex, tulipwood, theatrical lights, and steel and incorporates a semi-circular frame and three movable screens. During the run of show the theatre will be used for a Grand Opening Night performance by Carlos Maria Romero and a cabaret performance by Danai Anesiadou in March.

Here, in *Il Traviatore* from 2013 Italian artist **PIETRO ROCCASALVA** has drawn in pastel on forex an illustration of a performance from 2002 that was fundamental to the development of his work. The character in this performance is a waiter holding a dish, a citrus juicer, and a cover, all made of stainless steel: a Kafkaesque messenger who, having nothing to convey; conveys nothing. The work was purchased for the collection in 2013 from David Kordansky Gallery.

THANKS

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To Rebel Rebel Flowers

INFORMATION

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Opening Times:
Thu—Sat, 12 - 6 pm
Tue—Wed by Appointment