



MUTATED REALITY

27 November 2015—2 March 2016

FRANCIS BACON
CHUCK CLOSE
GEORGE CONDO
WIM DELVOYE
CARROLL DUNHAM

KAWS
MIKE KELLEY
TONY MATELLI
MALCOLM MORLEY
PETER SAUL

"I think that man now realizes that he is an accident," says artist, Francis Bacon, in a discussion with his trusted interviewer, critic David Sylvester, "that he is a completely futile being, that he has to play out the game without reason. I think that, even when Velasquez was painting, even when Rembrandt was painting, in a peculiar way, they were still, whatever their attitude to life, slightly conditioned by certain types of religious possibilities, which man now, you could say, has had completely cancelled out for him."
— Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon's *Two Men Working in a Field* (1971) opens the *Mutated Reality* exhibition with a raw and unapologetic vision of the human condition. Painted in the late 20th century, the work reflects a profound shift in the visual arts—away from rationalist ideals and religious paradigms, toward an era marked by uncertainty, fragmentation, and expressive freedom. Grounded in the lineage of French and British painting, Bacon's canvas subverts tradition by warping perspective and dismantling classical form. In doing so, it signals a break from the constraints of statuary

idealism and embraces the chaotic, emotive pulse of a world in flux.

In the spirit of the Surrealists—Breton, Dalí, Ernst—artists of this era deconstruct the human figure not to anatomize, but to recompose it according to the force of desire, instinct, and distortion. The result is often an aesthetic of modern primitivism, as seen in Carroll Dunham's *Dead Space (Wall)* (2005) or Peter Saul's subversive *Here Comes the Garbage* (2012). In these works, the image is no longer a window to reality but a battleground of psychological, political, and cultural tensions.

George Condo's *Spiderwoman* (2002) exemplifies this approach with a hybrid form that fuses the elegance of the classical nude with grotesque, Boschian distortions. The figure exudes self-contained sexuality, yet is fractured and uncanny—an emblem of postmodern identity.

This fractured sensibility carries through in Chuck Close's monumental portrait *Shirley* (2007), where decorative pixilation dissolves the human face into a shimmering mosaic. Evoking the faceted faces of Picasso, Close's work resists photographic realism in favor of something more intimate and abstract—identity rendered as an accumulation of marks, impressions, and digital echoes.

In Tony Matelli's unsettling sculpture *Fucked Couple* (2005–2007), the battered bodies of two intertwined figures evoke accident victims. Yet their brutal realism transcends the grotesque; they suggest endurance, survival, and the persistence of intimacy amid chaos—a paradoxical homage to classical themes of the eternal couple.

Wim Delvoye pushes visual mutation to grotesque extremes in *Bidjar* (2011), where a taxidermied pig is tattooed with ornate carpet motifs. The absurdity of the gesture—part medieval, part contemporary—underscores the collapse of high and low, the sacred and the commercial, in a world where even skin becomes a site of cultural pastiche.

Further interrogating mass culture, KAWS reimagines cartoon characters as postmodern icons. Like Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans*, his work captures the spirit of our commodified, image-saturated world. Yet KAWS goes further—injecting pathos and narrative into the slick surfaces of popular media, exposing both their allure and emptiness.

Mike Kelley delves into cultural mythmaking with *Kandor*, a series named after Superman's bottled city. These glowing miniatures explore our collective fixation on utopia, justice, and omnipotence—concepts as seductive as they are unattainable. Kelley's work suggests that even our fantasies are now subject to mutation, compression, and critical reappraisal.

Together, the artists of *Mutated Reality* confront a world stripped of absolutes. They blend nostalgia with irreverence, myth with critique, beauty with disfigurement. Through varied strategies—distortion, repetition, exaggeration, and deconstruction—they illuminate the profound metamorphoses that have shaped art over the past half-century. What unites them is a shared commitment to confronting reality not as fixed or knowable, but as constantly shifting—mutated—by history, technology, desire, and doubt.

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