

THE SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT PRESENTS A LARGE-SCALE EXHIBITION WITH WORKS BY THE AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER PHILIP-LORCA DICORCIA

## PHILIP-LORCA DICORCIA PHOTOGRAPHS 1975–2012

June 20–September 8, 2013

Preview for the press: Wednesday, June 19, 2013, 11:00 a.m.

Beginning June 20, 2013, the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt is hosting the first European survey of the oeuvre of US photographer Philip-Lorca diCorcia. Born in 1951, diCorcia is one of the most important and influential contemporary photographers. His images oscillate between everyday elements and arrangements that are staged down to the smallest detail. In his works, seemingly realistic images that are taken with an ostensibly documentary eye are undermined by their highly elaborate orchestration. One of the primary issues that diCorcia addresses is the question of whether it is possible to depict reality, and this is what links his photographs, most of which he creates as series. For *Hustlers* (1990–1992), for example, he took pictures of male prostitutes in meticulously staged settings, while in what is probably his most famous series, *Heads* (2000–2001), he captured an instant in the everyday lives of unsuspecting passers-by. Alongside the series *Streetwork* (1993–1999), *Lucky 13* (2004) and *A Storybook Life* (1975–1999), the exhibition at the Schirn, which was organized in close collaboration with the artist, will also present works from his new and ongoing *East of Eden* (2008–) project for the first time.

The exhibition “Philip-Lorca diCorcia” is sponsored by BNY Mellon and the Museums-kooperationspool der Stadt Frankfurt am Main.

Max Hollein, director of the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt: “Philip-Lorca diCorcia is one of the absolute stars on the American photography scene. We are proud to be able to present his works to a German public for the first time in this scope and intensity. DiCorcia’s images stand out due to their iconographic visual quality, which lends the medium of photography its very own relevance.”

“Philip-Lorca diCorcia’s photographs alternate between snapshots and compositions with virtually baroque theatrics,” remarks Katharina Dohm, curator of the exhibition. “He communicates a fundamental picture of the human figure that becomes a direct experience for the viewer. The assembly of works at the Schirn provides the unique opportunity of immersing oneself in the mysterious worlds of this important contemporary artist and becoming familiar with his eye for social realities.”

Philip-Lorca diCorcia was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1951. He studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston from 1972 to 1975 before receiving his Master of Fine Arts in photography from Yale University in 1979. The photographer is considered to be one of the most important American artists of his generation. In 1993, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York mounted the first solo exhibition of diCorcia’s works. This was followed by mostly solo shows focusing on individual series, including important exhibitions at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston in 2007 and at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2008. In Europe, only samples from diCorcia’s series had been presented up to that point in solo or group shows.

The extensive exhibition features 6 series comprising a total of 124 works, beginning with the most recent photographs from the ongoing series *East of Eden* to diCorcia’s earliest works: to *A*

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*Storybook Life* (1975–1999). The collection of portraits, landscapes, interiors, still lifes, snapshots, and travel photographs outlines a period of artistic work spanning more than twenty years. This extensive series was not assembled to adhere either to a strict chronology or a logical narrative. Only the titles of the images provide information about the date the pictures were taken and the respective location. Yet the complex nexus of the specific visual worlds opens up an emotionally charged narrative arc.

For the *Hustlers* series (1990–1992), diCorcia shot photographs of male prostitutes along Santa Monica Boulevard in Hollywood. The artist carefully staged the protagonists' positions as well as the setting and the accompanying lighting. The titles of the respective photographs make reference to the name, age, and birthplace of the men as well as the amount of money diCorcia paid them for posing and which they typically receive for their sexual services. Staged in Tinseltown, the Hollywood district of Los Angeles, the hustlers become the touching performers of their own lost dreams.

The streets of New York, Tokyo, Paris, London, Mexico City, or Los Angeles are the setting for diCorcia's *Streetwork* series. Produced between 1993 and 1999, passers-by walk into the artist's photo trap on their way home, to work, to the gym, or to the grocery store, unsuspectingly passing through diCorcia's arranged photoflash system. The photographer releases the shutter at a certain moment, "freezing" it in time. DiCorcia has time stand still in the hustle and bustle of big-city life and shifts individuals and groups of people into the center of events. In much the same way as in *Hustlers*, what counts here is not the documentary character of the work; instead, diCorcia poses the question: What is reality?

The artist heightens this focus on the individual in his subsequent series, *Heads* (2000–2001), for which he selected seventeen heads out of a total of some three thousand photographs. The viewer's gaze is directed toward the face of the passer-by, who is moved into the center of the image by means of the lighting and the pictorial detail. The rest remains in shadowy darkness. The individuals—a young woman, a tourist, a man wearing a suit and tie—seem strangely isolated, almost lonely, their gazes otherworldly. DiCorcia turns the inside outward and for a brief moment elevates the individual above the crowd. The artist produces a profound intimacy.

With *Streetwork* and *Heads*, diCorcia treads a very individual path of street photography, which in America looks back at a long tradition established by artists such as Walker Evans, Robert Frank, or Diane Arbus. He reinvents the seemingly chance moment and transfers it into the present.

The painterly quality of diCorcia's photographs, which is produced by means of dramatic lighting, becomes particularly evident in the series *Lucky 13* (2004). The artist captures the athletic, naked bodies of pole dancers in the midst of a falling motion. The women achieve a sculptural plasticity by means of the strong lighting and the almost black background, and seem to have been chiseled in stone. Although the title of the series, an American colloquialism used to ward off a losing streak, makes reference to the seamy milieu of strip joints, the artist is not seeking to create a milieu study or celebrate voyeurism. Instead, the performers become metaphors for impermanence, luck, or the moment they begin to fall, suggesting the notion of "fallen angels."

DiCorcia also includes a religious element in his most recent works, the series *East of Eden*, a work in progress that is being published for the first time in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition. Besides the biblical inspiration, which the title underscores, a literary connection can furthermore be made to the eponymous novel by John Steinbeck, which relates the story of Cain and Abel in the form of an American family saga set between the period of the Civil War and World War I. In his choice of motifs, diCorcia makes use of iconographic visual worlds: an apple tree in all

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its tantalizing glory, a blind married couple sitting at the dining table, a landscape photograph that leads us into endless expanses.

DiCorcia deals intensely with the motif of the figure in his oeuvre. His compact compositions are marked by a non-dialogue between people and their environment or between individual protagonists. The motifs captured in compositional variations in most of the series feature painterly qualities. Subtly arranged and falling back on a complex orchestration of the lighting, the visual worlds created by the American manifest social realities in an almost poetic way. The emotionally and narratively charged works are complex nexuses of iconographic allusions to and depictions of contemporary American society.

The exhibition "Philip-Lorca diCorcia", which was developed by the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, will subsequently be presented at the De Pont museum voor hedendaagse kunst in Tilburg, the Netherlands (October 5, 2013–January 19, 2014).

**CATALOGUE:** Philip-Lorca diCorcia. Edited by Katharina Dohm, Max Hollein und Hendrik Driessen. Foreword by Max Hollein and Hendrik Driessen, introduction by Katharina Dohm, essay by Geoff Dyer, as well as Christoph Ribbat in conversation with the artist. English/German, 208 pages, 124 illustrations, 29 x 21 cm, graphic design: box studios, New York; Kerber Verlag, Bielefeld 2013, ISBN 978-3-86678-835-0, price: €27.80 (museum edition), ca. €36.00 (trade edition).

**VENUE:** SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg, D-60311 Frankfurt, Germany.

**DURATION:** June 20– September 8, 2013. **OPENING HOURS:** Tue, Fri–Sun 10.00 a.m.–7:00 p.m., Wed and Thu 10.00 a.m.–10:00 p.m. **OPENING:** June 19, 2013, 7:00 p.m. **INFORMATION:** www.schirn.de, email: welcome@schirn.de, telephone: (+49-69) 29 98 82-0, telefax: (+49-69) 29 98 82-240. **ADMISSION:** €8.00, reduced €6.00, family ticket €16.00; combination ticket with the exhibition *Glam!* €15.00, reduced €11.00; children under the age of eight admitted free of charge.

**GUIDED TOURS FOR THE PUBLIC:** Wed 7:00 p.m., Thu 8:00 p.m., Sat 3:00 p.m., Sun 5:00 p.m.

**CURATOR:** Katharina Dohm. **SPONSORED BY:** BNY Mellon and the Museumskooperationspool der Stadt Frankfurt am Main. **MEDA PARTNER:** Interview Magazine Germany. **ONLINE MAGAZINE:** www.schirn-magazin.de.

**PRESS:** Axel Braun (Director Press/PR), Simone Krämer (Press officer), Lara Schuh (Trainee).

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