

the penultimate

A Sight To Be Seen

Text: Russell Christopher



Cindy Crawford (1994), Irving Penn



Untitled (Brad), 2009, Chuck Close



Untitled (Kate), 2003, Chuck Close

A unique cooperation between an art collector and The Peninsula New York has resulted in a fabulous treat for the public

It's not every day that you're offered the use of a stunning collection of classic portraits, lifestyle and art shots by some of the world's leading photographers and artists, however when the opportunity presented itself to The Peninsula New York, it was one that was too good to pass by.

The offer from collector Mr Alvaro Leal, Managing Director, Global Pacifica was accepted and it was agreed to feature selected works from the his collection in public areas of the hotel where they could be exposed to and appreciated by the greatest number of people. Mr. Leal acted as the curator of the exhibit, selecting the exact pieces to be displayed and choosing the most appropriate location to show each work. The results of this collaboration are now available for public viewing on the public lower levels of The Peninsula New York from now until the end of August 2012.

In the Lower Lobby, pieces by Chuck Close, Helmut Newton and Irving Penn reveal how well the style of an artist can convey very specific, although different feelings, about similar subjects. The concept of beauty is captured in very different forms in portraits of Cindy Crawford, Brad Pitt Kate Moss and Kara Walker.

Chuck Close is famous for resurrecting the first commercially successful photography process, called daguerreotyping. In his portrait of Kara Walker, Close uses a play of light and shadows to make the artist look like one of the famous black silhouettes that are her trademark style.

Helmut Newton and Irving Penn each approached Cindy Crawford's beauty from very different angles. Newton's style was always to make women's beauty look powerful, and he photographed Crawford standing on the Berlioz statue's podium in Monte Carlo, presenting her as a goddess ruling over the mortal admirers of her youth and body.

Irving Penn was a master of texture and subtleties in photography. In his shot of Crawford, the supermodel is also placed on a pedestal,

but is portrayed more as a muse than a goddess. The viewer is not challenged as in Newton's work, but rather serenely seduced by Crawford's beauty.

Cindy Sherman is one of today's most influential contemporary artists. Building from Richard Avedon's contribution of changing photography from being a tool to capture a moment of still reality by letting narratives flow from the emotions and actions of his subjects, Sherman shows how photography can bring answers to philosophical questions. The three pieces in this exhibit are from Sherman's early career. The two smaller pieces by the entrance to the Gotham Lounge belong to her most celebrated series, 'Film Stills'.

Venezuelan Arturo Herrera's 'Boys and Dwarfs' graces one of the walls in the Gotham Lounge, whilst an untitled piece by British photographer Bill Brandt and Brazilian Vik Muniz's work 'Saturn devouring of his son (after Francisco de Goya y Lucientes)' are also on display in the Lounge.

Egyptian Nabil Youssef's portrait 'Amani by Window' hangs in The Lobby. Nabil takes a different style path to express his style by the choice of colours in his artworks. He has been inspired by an old technique used before the proliferation of colour photography, to add colour by hand to black-and-white images. Nabil develops his photographs as silver prints and later hand paints meticulously to further bring his subjects alive.

Dutchman Erwin Olaf's work entitled 'Paris, Room 1134' is displayed near the elevator. Olaf's characters are photographed inside well-crafted sets, leaving the viewer enough clues to imagine an original narrative. His piece in this exhibit belongs to his 'Hotel' series, in which he recreated certain hotel rooms where he stayed around the world whilst travelling on business.

With various artworks on rotation throughout The Peninsula New York, guests and New Yorkers alike may enjoy fine art without the crowds and entrance fee of museums.