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ON CAREFUL CURATION AND FINDING NEW TALENT

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<http://uk.lumas.com/>

LUMAS is a highly successful fine art photography brand, with 40 galleries worldwide and an online sales platform that showcases the entire portfolio of over 1,800 works by 200 established and emerging photographers. LUMAS' Executive Curator Heike Dander shares her thoughts on finding new photography talent, top tips for buying new works this Autumn, and how to curate exhibitions from such a large portfolio across so many international galleries:

We champion emerging artists at LUMAS and are always on the look out for new talent to join our portfolio. A crucial factor in spotting an artist is whether they have a certain style that is evident throughout their entire series of works. Any photograph, whether hanging in a gallery or in a private home, should sit well as an individual work of art, removed from any other context. So we look for photographers that demonstrate a certain standard or style across a body of work.

A first port of call for approaching new artists is often through other galleries or at art fairs, so our curatorial team can be found out and about for much of the time. We grant gifted young artists from major universities and academies the same consideration as established international artists. Our portfolio is markedly diverse. While we specialise in photography, we also feature illustration and painting as well as collages and photo montages.

However, while exhibitions and art fairs are important to get your work noticed, we are increasingly finding that a strong internet presence is extremely useful for us and for artists these days. We also scour photography blogs, popular magazines, and of course social media networks. For an artist, visibility is key!

Visibility is also where we come into play. Being part of the LUMAS portfolio means exhibiting in 17 countries and over 40 galleries. Suddenly, the artist has a presence in Berlin, London, New York, Basel, Vienna, Dubai, and Vancouver all at the same time. That is enormously important for many of our artists especially those who are building their profile. Recently, one of our American artists, Clay Lipsky, was on a tour of Europe and came across his own work in our gallery in Salzburg and immediately shared with us his excitement at such an unexpected surprise. Certainly the international aspect of the LUMAS brand is a big part of our, and our artists, success. Our final main consideration for building up our portfolio is diversity. That means we're dedicated



Flamingo Kids 1 © Sebastian Mader



Flamingo Kids 2 © Sebastian Mader

to showcasing a collection of new artists whom we've just brought into the portfolio alongside artists whose work has been with LUMAS for perhaps eight or nine years. We place a lot of value in working together over the long term, and you can see that in our exhibitions as well. For some time now, our portfolio has also been open to other genres as well, meaning you are equally likely to find graphic art and illustrations as paintings and digital art.

We are very proud to have so many notable artists from these fields, such as Nam June Paik, Yue Minjun, and Raymond Pettibon. Starting this Autumn, we will also have new works by Joseph Beuys and Georg Baselitz. Ultimately, we want our exhibitions to grant visitors a well-rounded look into the contemporary art and design scene.

As well as researching and recruiting new artists to join our portfolio, we also curate exhibitions and gallery spaces around the world. This takes a lot of work and requires a full team to compliment the work of each individual gallery director. Our curators need a unique set of skills. It's one part instinct and one part talent for looking at works aesthetically. Of course there is also an element of developing curatorial skills through experience and education – workshops and training sessions. The hardest part of curating an exhibition is the selection of, and interplay between, the individual pieces. Limiting everything to the essential and nevertheless creating an experience that captures the character of the theme in all its diversity. And last but not least, to convince the visitors of the idea and concept in the end. I don't think it's very different curating photography from curating other forms of art; photography is such an essential component of contemporary art but also historical photo artists can be seamlessly inserted into curatorial concepts.

At LUMAS, unlike many galleries, we don't have a set exhibition programme as we rotate the works of our portfolio throughout our gallery spaces. At any one time you'll find a number of different artists and works on show. However, we do occasionally curate a group of works by a particular theme. For example our most recent exhibition entitled Viva Cuba!

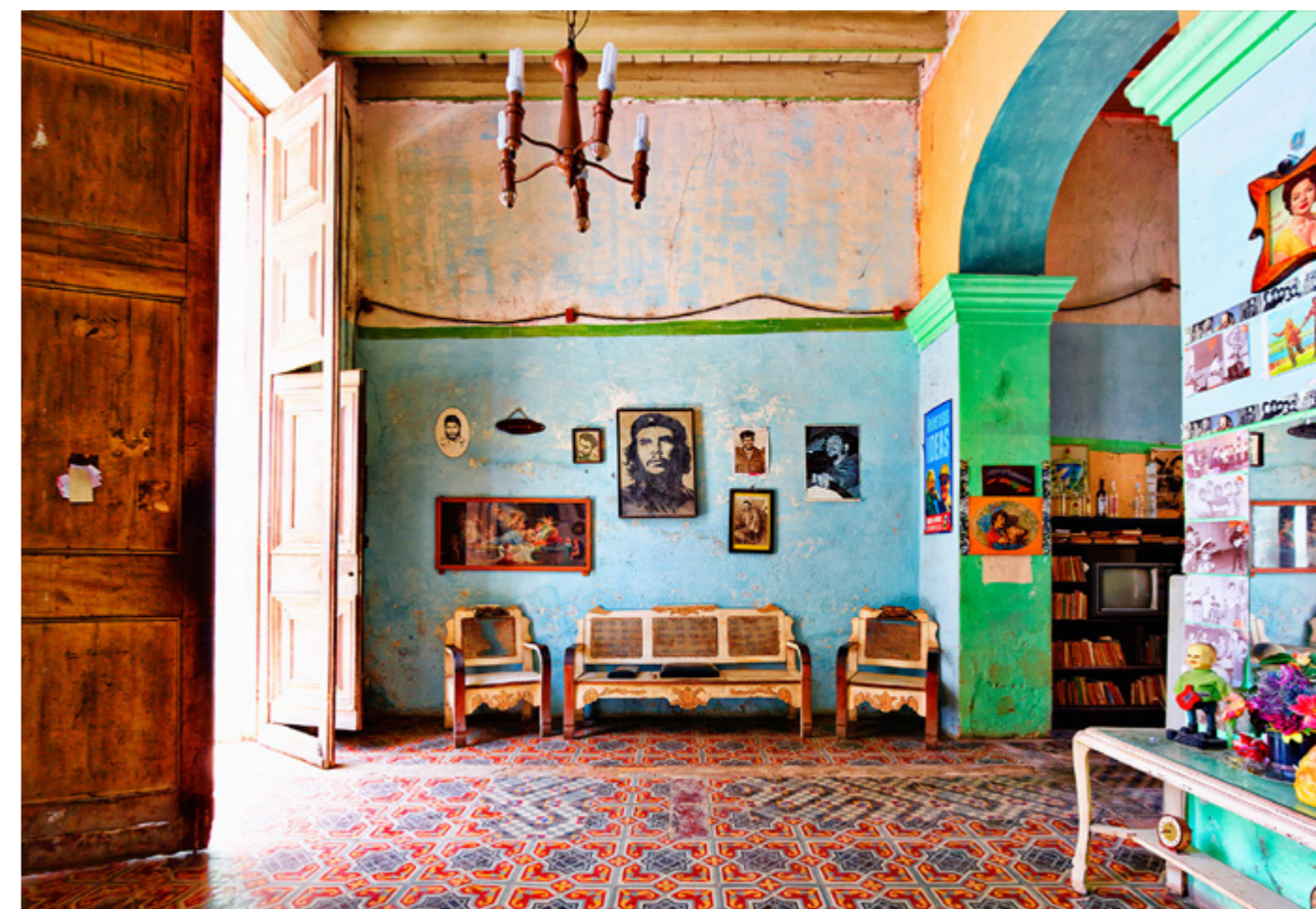


Paseo del Prado, Havana © Luigi Visconti



San Miguel y Aguila © Werner Pawlok

The photographs from Werner Pawlok, Luigi Visconti and Larry Yust, while very different, unite in showing us that Cuba is at a really exciting turning point. Not only is it interesting on a political level, it's also fascinating to see what is happening there culturally and how this period of change affects the architecture, the living conditions and the every day life of Havana. As a result, we decided to stage a full group exhibition giving due attention to the works rather than diluting them amongst the rest of our collection. Pawlok in particular has been photographing Cuba since the early 1970s. His photographs were being filed away in his archives until one day I came across them and saw such great potential in his work. His Cuba – Expired series has been a bestseller ever since and his new series was created exclusively for LUMAS; a very promising sign of the developing relationship between artists and LUMAS.



House of Chino © Werner Pawlok