

Philip-Lorca diCorcia

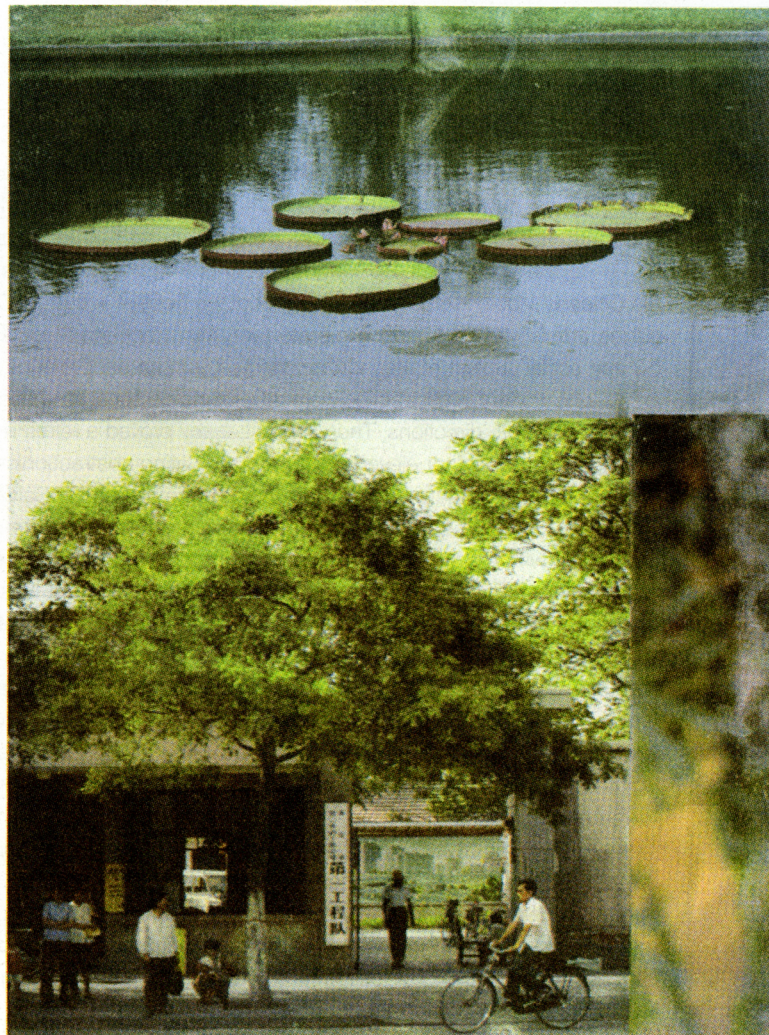
LACMA, 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles

We begin our brief survey of Philip-Lorca diCorcia's LACMA retrospective with *Head #23*, a photograph that startles and seduces in a very classical, very film-noir way. The photo makes me fall in love with this young girl, yet I am also afraid for her. I want to tell her about Gary Winogrand and how he was always falling in love, through his camera, with women in the urban streets. All photography, but especially street reportage-type photography, is predatory in nature. The photographer rarely takes responsibility for this intrusion, for this addiction, by way of maintaining a miraculous empathy for the subject. (Mexican photojournalist Enrique Metinides endlessly documents disaster/murder/catastrophe scenes, but in them you will also discover a profound humanity — previously thought extinct — ringing throughout.) Where Winogrand is a humanitarian, diCorcia is not, so that a conspicuous lack of humanity, a vague and insidious imperative, and a dark urge grows with every contemporary photography-considered minute.

This leads us to the *Lucky 13* series, where naked and semi-naked pole dancers perform in an otherwise empty club (diCorcia needs his privacy, you see). Ironically, the photographs are not sexual. There is a shocking disaffection for these nightclub sirens that would make Jim Morrison roll over in his grave. The photographer treats these lost angels the way Bernd and Hilla Becher treated industrial architecture. DiCorcia lacks real interest in these strippers because they have nothing to show him, nothing to hide. The same is true of diCorcia's series *Hustlers*. It's a Larry Clark voyeur routine, but diCorcia is unable to really penetrate into his male prostitutes' characters the way Clark did and continues to do. Yes, diCorcia offers dramatic treatments of these tragic, wayward youths through sexy lighting and considered compositions, but there is nothing more to these emblems (human figures, lighting, scenery) than their staging. 🍷 — **Darrin Little**



Philip-Lorca diCorcia, *Head #23*, Fujicolor Crystal Archive print mounted to Plexiglas, 48" x 60", 2000. Courtesy of David Zwirner, New York. ©Philip-Lorca diCorcia.



Robert Rauschenberg, *The Lotus Bed II*, pigmented inkjet, 60 3/4" x 45 3/4", 2008

Robert Rauschenberg: The Lotus Series

Greenfield Sacks Gallery, Bergamot Station, Santa Monica

The Lotus Series of pigmented inkjet and photogravure prints comprised Rauschenberg's last completed body of work, brought to fruition barely six weeks before his death. The series was "built," in Rauschenberg's rebus-like late style, out of photographs and other visual imagery he took away from his visits to China in the early 1980s, imagery he had not had the opportunity to employ until this year. The work thus stands as testament in particular to Rauschenberg's characteristically acute perspicacity — that is, to the fact that he was one of the first art-worlders to sense the artistic stirring of the slumbering giant. Universal Limited Art Editions published this series specifically for exhibition this year in Beijing, so the whole thing has come full circle.

Aside from this history, and the eulogistic tone the series and show have taken on reflexively, the work itself, as with so much of his art since the 1980s, typifies Rauschenberg's working method almost to the point of didactic transparency: add this to this to this to this, all in a manner that seems entirely random but follows its own visual logic, a logic that reveals itself suddenly, all at once, at some point during the viewer's contemplation. Indeed, that moment of revelation, which includes the realization that the visual relationships don't — or at least don't have to — "mean" anything, only cohere, provides the work's appealing *frisson*. It's true that, like some School of Paris demigod, Rauschenberg spent his latter decades producing *Rauschenbergs*, putting aside the extravagant experimentation of his earlier years. But he wasn't just coasting. By devising a formula that prompts the viewer to participate in the process of visual discovery, Rauschenberg had found a way to share the "fun part" with his audience. "The viewer completes the work of art," his old friend Duchamp had observed, and Rauschenberg took him at his word. 🍷

— **Peter Frank**