



PHOTO: HENRY LEUTWYLER

HEATHER GAUDIO FINE ART

MICHAEL DWECK | BLUNDERBUST

IN NOVEMBER 2023, HEATHER GAUDIO MOVED HER ESTEEMED HEATHER GAUDIO FINE ART FROM NEW CANAAN TO ITS NEW LOCATION AT 382 GREENWICH AVENUE IN GREENWICH. WITH DECADES OF EXPERIENCE IN THE ART ADVISORY AND GALLERY BUSINESS, HEATHER GAUDIO AND HER EXPERT TEAM ARE WELL-ESTABLISHED AS PREEMINENT CLIENT REPRESENTATIVES AND CURATORS OF FINE ART.



PHOTO: FERNANDO RANGEL

From April 11 to June 1, 2024, Heather Gaudio Fine Art will be exhibiting MICHAEL DWECK: BLUNDERBUST. While Heather Gaudio Fine Art may be best known for showcasing important artists before they are more widely recognized, Michael Dweck has already achieved superstar status in the art world. ...And to know Dweck, is to know a true artist... passionately consumed with his work...and dedicated to his particular expression.

“When I was 7, my parents bought me my first camera and took me to the 1964 New York World’s Fair,” Dweck recalls, “...and I’ve been obsessed with artistic expression ever since. Initially, I pursued architecture and went to Pratt Institute with the goal of becoming an architect. In my freshman year, I collaborated on a final project, designing a house resembling Colonel Sanders’ head with a drumstick-shaped bus stop in front of the house. Philip Johnson, critiquing our work, found it too whimsical. Although I intended it as a critique of conventional architecture, I shifted toward fine arts and graphic design.”

In 2003, Dweck was first recognized for his photographic collection called ‘The End: Montauk, N.Y.’, about the disappearing ‘life at the beach’ in the ever-increasingly-wealthy community of Montauk. “In my work, I’m interested in depicting the beauty and intricacy of human life, while exploring ongoing struggles between identity and adaptation within endangered societal enclaves,” Dweck explains. “Montauk, to me, was an evocation of a real-world paradise lost: the paradise of summer, youth, and erotic possibility. The body of work is a portrait of a place in time and a way of life at once fading and being reinvented with each new season.”

“And then, at a young age, everything exploded for me,” Dweck recalls. “Sotheby’s in New York held a 65-photograph solo exhibition of this work, and I gained gallery representation in the U.S. and abroad. A book of those works, which The New York Times called ‘the ultimate homage to the sun-kissed surfing life’, was published in 2004, and the entire edition sold out in two weeks. One of the photographs from that series was even displayed in a group show featuring major works from that year at the Louvre.”

BING BANG BOOM



Dweck's second major body of photographic work was titled 'Mermaids'. It featured a group of women living on Aripeka Island in Florida, who were the children of stone crab fisherman and the women who worked in the nearby Weeki Wachee Spring Mermaid show. These women were able to swim underwater in the Weeki Wachee River and hold their breath at depths of up to forty feet for long spans of time. Dweck elaborates, "I've always had a fascination with light and refraction, so in 2007 I decided to travel to the springs of the Gulf Coast of Florida, where the water was consistently warm and clear. There, I photographed the Mermaids, underwater at night, with my camera inside a thick-walled plexiglass box, suspending a high-powered light sixty feet above the limestone river bank. To me, the allure of these beautiful figures is made more compelling by their elusiveness, their strange remoteness, as if abstracted by the medium of water, and immersed in a realm beyond solid ground. Much like a dream."



FADED GLORY

Dweck's next focus was on a community of artists living under the radar of the government in Cuba, where Dweck befriended one of Fidel Castro's sons - a fellow photographer - and examined the juxtaposition of a privileged group living within a classless society. Dweck's Habana Libre exhibition was the first body of work by a living American artist to be exhibited in Cuba since the Revolution.



And Dweck has directed and produced several award-winning films about what he calls the 'endangered communities and cultures' that captivate him. Dweck's *The Truffle Hunters* took a deep dive into the lives of the tiny circle of Northern Italian elders who guide their canines to find the world's most sought after white Alba truffles. It debuted at Sundance in 2020 and was shortlisted for the 2021 Oscars. His *Gaucha Gaucha*, about a group of Argentinian cowboys and cowgirls still moving cattle through a modern world, was a hit at Sundance 2024. "By weaving emotional and visually evocative narratives, my aim with cinema is to immerse the audience in the beauty, wonder, and joy I encounter within these communities," Dweck explains.

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But, *all along*, Dweck has been fixated on, of all things, short-oval stock car racing! ...With old Cadillacs, Buicks, and other bombers pitted in races with bumping allowed if not encouraged. Born in Brooklyn and raised in Bellmore, Long Island, Dweck grew up going twice-a-week to the 1/5th-of-a-mile Freeport Racetrack right in town. He lights up when he describes how, "The drivers were my heroes. Local mechanics and hobbyists - the cars are their weapons, sculptures, flags and family crests rolled into one. The cars are built from pieces and parts that the drivers salvage like treasure hunters in junk yards. Relics of another era, a time when cars were constructed with nuts, bolts, and welding torches, not silicon and plastic. The dents on their freshly painted fifty to sixty year old panels and the scars on their bodies are the hieroglyphics that reveal their past. The race track made me feel stimulated. It was the vocabulary of color, sound, texture, movement, form, and materials that got me excited."



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“You know, at one time there were something like three dozen of these racetracks on Long Island alone,” Dweck recalls. “The only one remaining is in Riverhead. I think Freeport closed in 1983, and I began to go to Riverhead Raceway. I made the track my studio for 23 weekends each year from 2008 to 2013, photographing...everything, as a way of memorializing the track and the community. These cars, these people, this place, they are moving slowly, their time is winding down. This idiosyncratic pastime - racing big, heavy, stock American sedans on a small precarious track - is out of step with the industrial world at large. The racetrack is subject and studio, but more so, a metaphor for a cultural phenomenon that is happening all around the world: the loss of concrete identity, the collapse of community establishments and institutions, and the corrosion of durable handmade objects which will, in time, become relics in a void.” And, in addition to his photography from Riverhead Raceway, Dweck also used the track as the set and subject of a movie - welding cameras to the front of race cars himself to get a real view of what it’s like to be the car. Called *The Last Race*, and distributed by Magnolia Pictures, the movie premiered at Sundance in 2018, and is a tribute to Dweck’s days-gone-by love.

“...Which brings me to the MICHAEL DWECK: BLUNDERBUST exhibition of my current work at Heather Gaudio Fine Art,” Dweck declares. “This is my very first exhibition of paintings! While at the track I was inspired by what I’ve come to term ‘beautiful accidents’. The freshly painted cars, layered with 20, 30, or even 40 coats of paint over the last 50 or so years, ‘rubbing’ against each other and revealing their stories in the process. Every scratch is like a scar, a wrinkle, a laughter line - evidence of a life well lived. This mechanical, aggressive act served as a catalyst for the spontaneous creation within the paintings. Layers reveal stories. That’s how these paintings are made. I want the viewer to become lost in the intricacies and layers of these paintings.”

About Blunderbust Dweck explains, “I began these works in 2022, creating abstract paintings that liberated me to explore the realm of randomness, which I had previously denied myself with photography. The interplay of arbitrary choices and chance, play a significant part of these works. For me, painting is like going to work, like being a mechanic. The physicality of the mechanics, welders, and race drivers brought into the language of abstract painting - to me, this is extremely powerful. I want to transform the raw energy of the track, that place of wonder, into art that can then be shared with the world. People say that we’re all seeking a meaning to life. What we are really seeking is the experience of being alive. That’s what these paintings represent.”



Michael Dweck | 1-2-3-GO



SCOTTS 77



TOMMYS TOWING

“Layers reveal stories. That’s how these paintings are made. I want the viewer to become lost in the intricacies and layers of these paintings.”

“We are thrilled to be exhibiting Dweck’s first foray into painting at the gallery. We have worked with him and represented his photography since we first opened the gallery thirteen years ago, and witnessing his artistic expansion into a new medium has been as exciting and evocative as the paintings themselves, Heather Gaudio shares, “We are thrilled Michael is a gifted artist who opens windows and visions to another world with a unique eye and perspective. These paintings are a portal into the world of cars and racing, and the speed and action on the racetrack are expertly expressed through paint and other race-related materials. There’s an authenticity to his processed-based approach in the Blunderbust paintings which is very exhilarating, genuine and thought-provoking. This exhibition will surely satisfy art and car aficionados alike.”

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