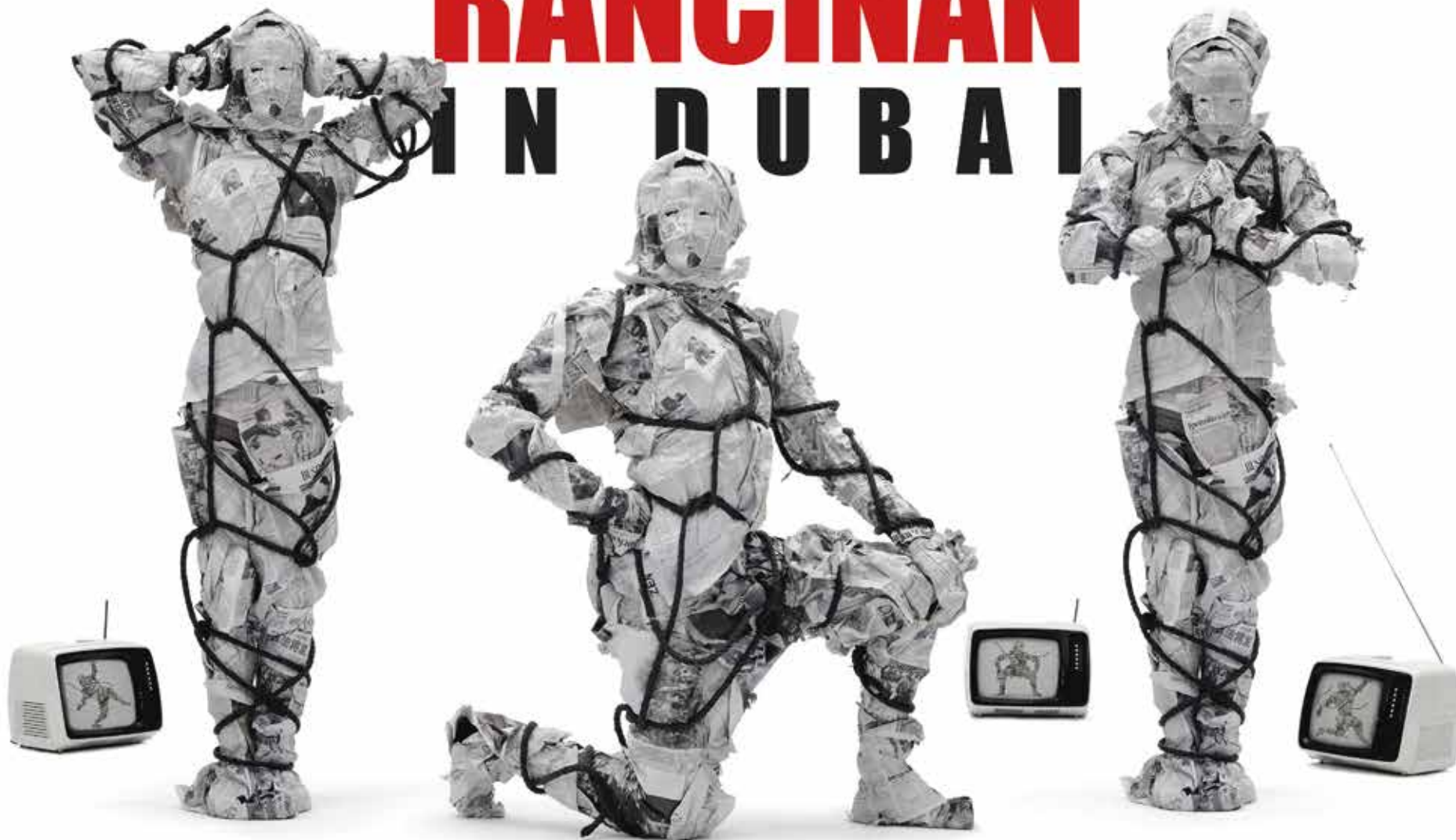


THE PHOTOGRAPHER
RANCINAN
IN DUBAI



OPERA GALLERY



PRE FACE

It is our great pleasure to host an exhibition by award winning French photographer Gérard Rancinan for the second time here in Dubai: a retrospective of his life's work, spanning several decades. Rancinan's post-developed practice of staged photography uses references from history, popular culture and Western art as a critical and sometimes satirical commentary on social and political issues.

By juxtaposing classical archetypes with pop imagery, he blurs the fine line between high and low art. Featuring a curated selection of visually seductive and epically proactive original photographs, Rancinan's works tell a dramatic tale of humanity's battle between social order and chaos; one which inexorably leads to a state of civil and moral degeneration. The exhibition's layout switches between populated scenes of barbaric disorder and desolated scenes of the aftermath. Influenced by the major world movements of globalization, religion, politics and the growing domination and ubiquity of the Internet, Rancinan offers a critical take through the looking glass of his lens.

This exhibition also focuses on portraits, which have brought the artist international acclaim. For the very first time, Rancinan has agreed to offer a selected few the opportunity to have their portraits taken. In true Rancinan style, people will experience the artist as he performs first-hand, including styling, make-up, set-direction, all leading to the satisfying and iconic "click" of his camera.

Internationally renowned, Gérard Rancinan's work is exhibited in prestigious museums throughout the world including the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the Danubiana Museum, Slovakia and the Triennale of Milan, Italy. We look forward to welcoming you to this mesmerizing exhibition as we relish in Rancinan's great return to Dubai.

Gilles Dyan
Founder & Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

Sylvain Gaillard
Director
Opera Gallery Dubai

INTERVIEW

Your background is in photojournalism and your career has covered a variety of fields: news and current events, sports, films, famous people... What brought you to photography in Contemporary art?

I've always taken things head-on while refusing all taboos about genre, all hierarchal limitations. 30 years ago, Pierre Cornette de Saint Cyr paid me a visit and triggered my interest in Contemporary art. That's how and why I'm here today!

You've photographed people like Fidel Castro and John Paul II. Anyone in particular you'd like to shoot today?

No. I've shot the greatest names, icons, politicians, artists, athletes that one could photograph. Nothing's missing. Maybe one day...



Your works of art are like photographic frescoes that have been meticulously staged: what's your *modus operandi*?

Think, imagine, sketch, model, cast, style, go to the studio... and shoot! 3 months!

When staging your shots, do you prefer working in a studio or outside, on location?

In a studio. I can control the lighting and, what's more, use my imagination to invent, recreate, rebuild. In a studio I can indulge my imagination without limits.

Are all of your shots and poses well-orchestrated or is there room for improvisation?

There's not a lot of improvisation, perhaps a variation here and there to adapt the idea and the original drawing to the medium which is photography; and also to make a message clearer.

MAKING-OF





Your work draws its inspiration from artistic, religious, pop culture and historical references. How do you create starting with such a heterogeneous confrontation of subjects and inspirations? How do you explain this way of using explicit references?

I've always thought that, generally speaking and as far as art's concerned, everything's already been done. Following explicit references, whispering, thus, into the ears of the great masters, makes me thrive, feeds me intellectually and humbles me. Having references is the mere minimum for any artist; without references, we're like a tree without roots.

Your work captivates the spectator while triggering a strong reaction: the relationship you create could be one that either provokes, accuses, teases or rather that builds affinity, sparks curiosity... Which one is it?

I awaken people's curiosity, intelligence, introspection. My pictures are not meant to shock or hurt. They are mirrors of these times, of contemporary humanity.

Your different series are so many artistic perspectives on the world today: the power of media, money and appearance; rampant violence... Is the utter outrageousness contained in some of your pictures meant to be cathartic?

They're not outrageous but only the faithful reflection on our world: obese, exaggerated, over-abundant and completely grotesque! It wouldn't be an accurate depiction of these times if everything I shot was discreet, harmonious and svelte.

Tell us about "Paper Men", your latest series, and how you got the idea in the first place.

As the newspaper industry disappears, it's taking accountability along with it. Professional journalists who actually signed the articles they wrote, assuming responsibility for their work, are now gone; and we're left with poor-quality imitations, mere caricatures of what journalism should be. This has led to a new writing code, one without rules or responsibility; a hemorrhage of images, unchecked information that floods smartphones, and are taken at face value! Television has become a true weapon of mass destruction, emptying brains while entertaining people in the most odious of ways. This is my ode to the shipwreck called humanity, as I watch it sink. This is my ultimate tribute, as I caress the newspapers one last time, listening to the sound of crinkling paper in my hands.

Does your art deliver a message?

I certainly hope so, otherwise it would be merely decorative art, in which case I'd need to change jobs!

You work alongside philosophers, writers, anthropologists, sociologists and journalists. Do you preach a transversal approach to photography?

I've always found it much more interesting to be part of a group of thinkers than all alone.



A majority of your pictures are part of a series. What is essay writer Caroline Gaudriault's role, especially in the series "A Small Man in a Big World"?

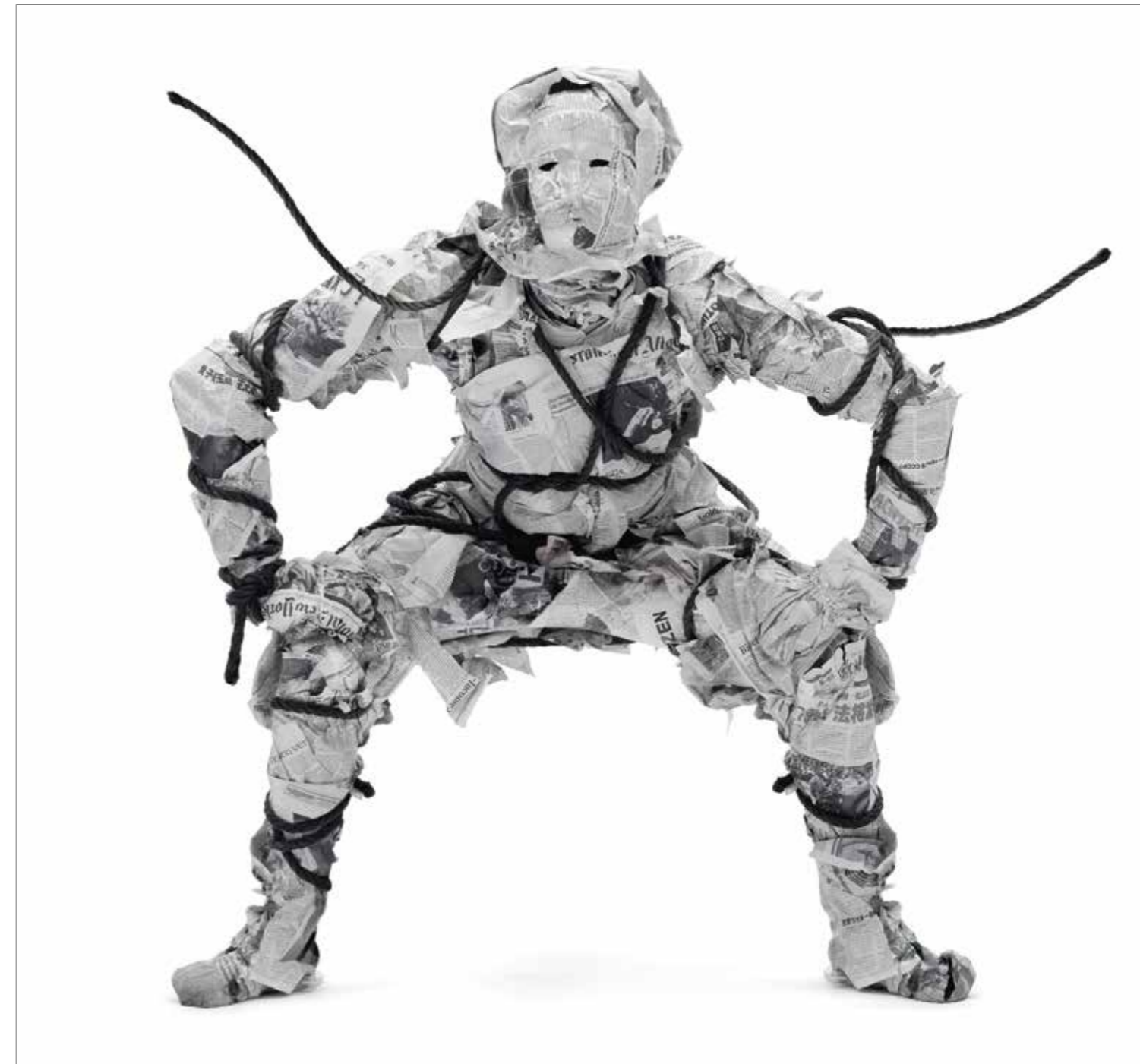
She's part of the discussion; she thinks about the state of the world and this adds a very interesting angle.

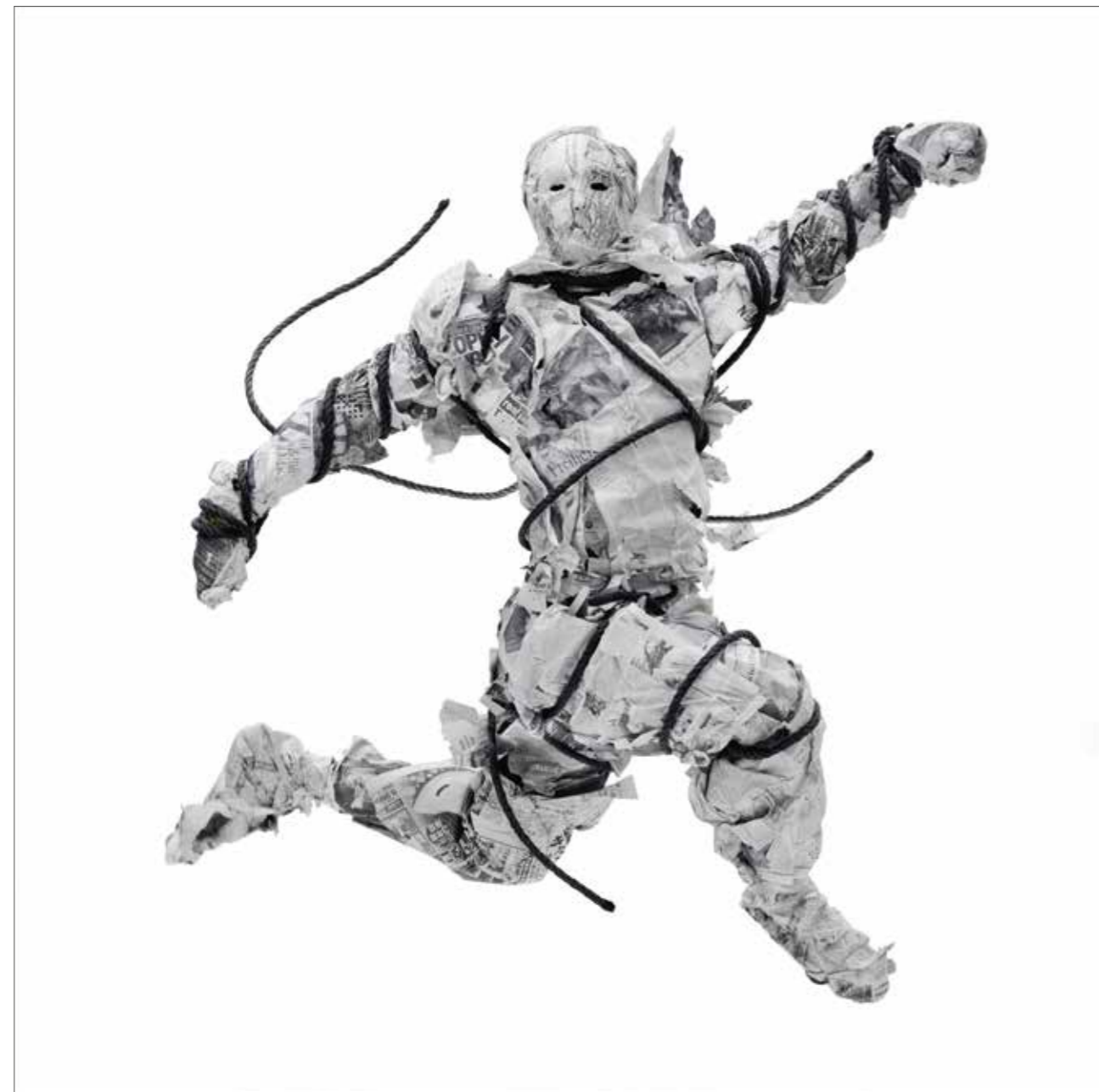
PAPER MEN

The professionals from newsprint are contemplated from various angles. As the symbol of a media gone mad, feeding the collective hysteria and the spectacular, where the lack of information is so screamingly blatant; there they are, trapped by their blindness; their self-inflicted muzzles epitomizing a new brand of self-censorship. Gérard Rancinan has received several World Press awards; he knows the other side of this proverbial coin. Critical towards an industry that has evolved so much, somewhat nostalgic for the press he grew up with and which has now morphed, this interpretation brilliantly underlines a vital message: the need for "media" to reclaim its free will.

Paper Men I, 2016

Argentique print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 3 + 3 EA
180 x 180 cm - 70.9 x 70.9 in.





Paper Men 2, 2016

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 3 - 60 x 60 cm - 23.6 x 23.6 in.



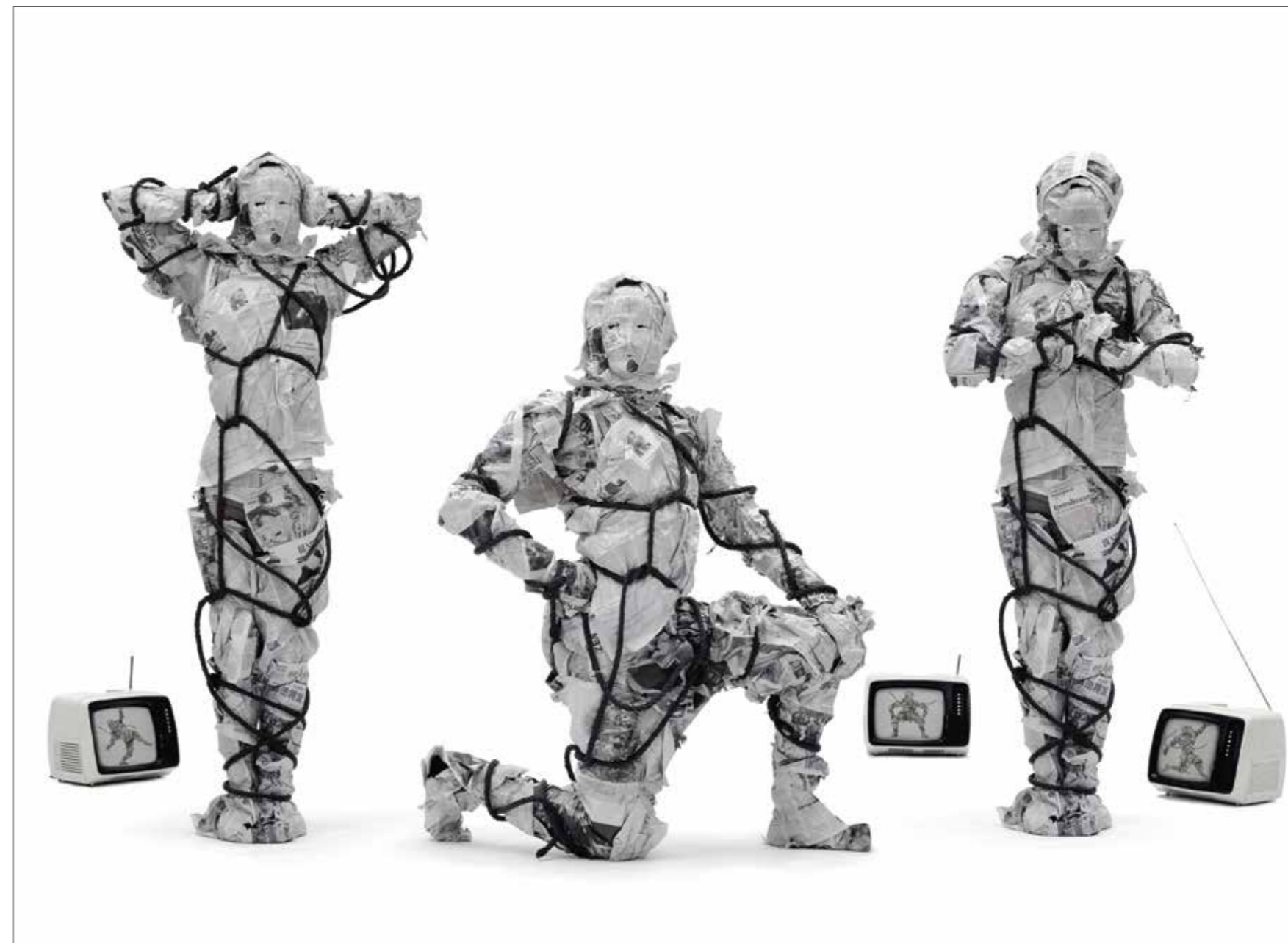
Paper Men 3, 2016

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 3 - 60 x 60 cm - 23.6 x 23.6 in.



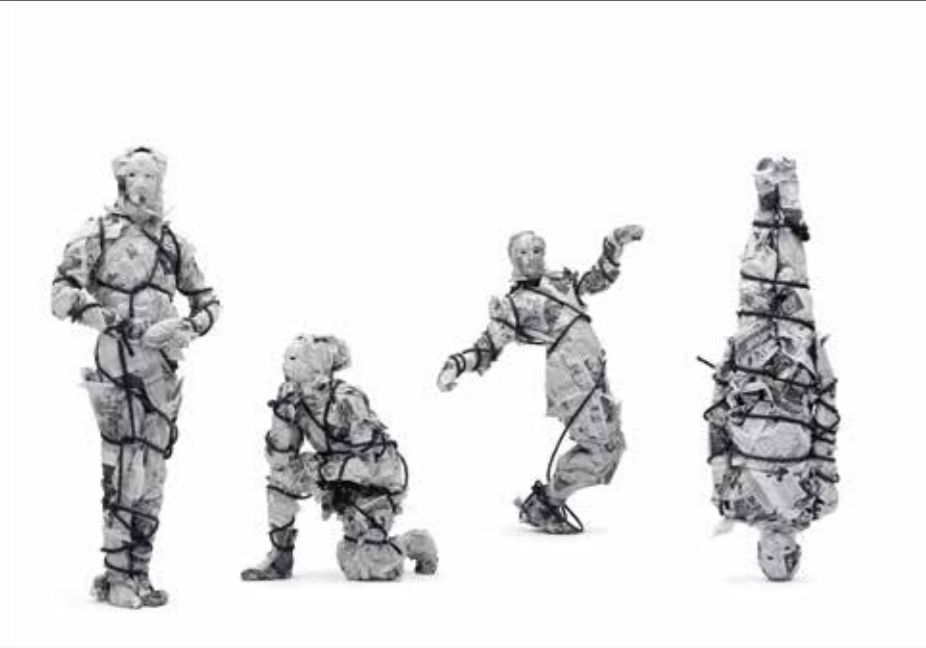
Paper Men 4, 2016

Argentica print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 3 - 60 x 60 cm - 23.6 x 23.6 in.



Paper Men 5, 2016

Argentica print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 8 + 4 EA - 125 x 180 cm - 49.2 x 70.9 in.



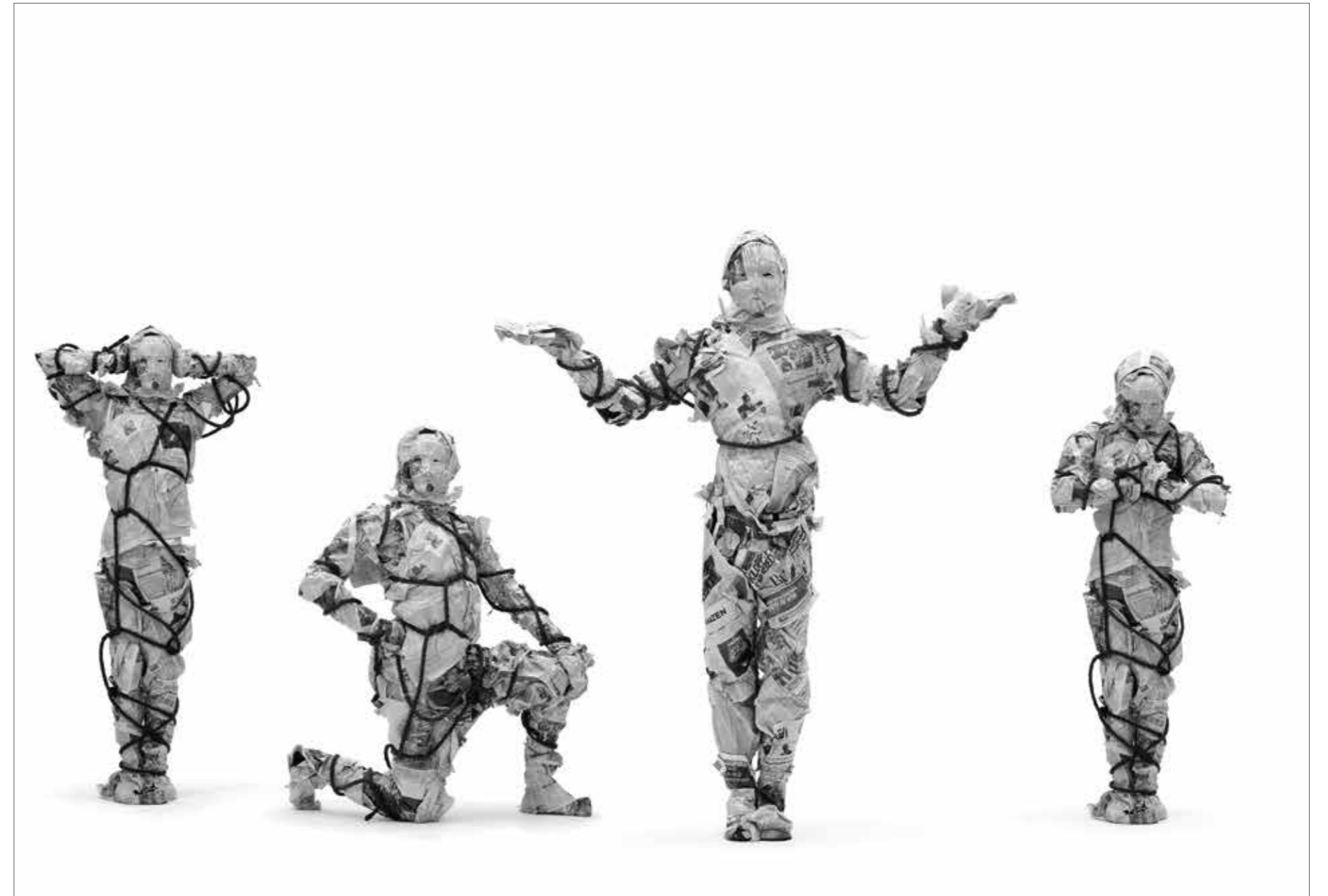
Paper Men 6, 2016

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 3
33 x 47 cm - 13 x 18.5 in.



Paper Men 7, 2016

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 3
33 x 47 cm - 13 x 18.5 in.



Paper Men 8, 2016

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 3 - 33 x 47 cm - 13 x 18.5 in.

Paper Men 9, 2016

Argentio print mounted on plexiglas
in artist's frame, edition of 3 + 3 EA
117 x 300 cm - 46 x 118.1 in.



THE DESTINY OF MEN

No one escapes their true nature, but everyone can rise above it. How can we challenge human destiny? It is this question that humanity has, over the course of its evolution, tirelessly attempted to answer. Today, for French artists, the question is more pressing than ever.

If we had to represent the immaterial part of Man – his thought, his desire for elevation and self-transcendence, his curiosity, that intangible essence handed down from one person to another, from parent to child, or from teacher to pupil – we would, perhaps, look to an ancient iconographical tradition from the Byzantine era, the symbolism of “the angel”. This anthropomorphic representation, dating back to the mosaics of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, to the “heaven bound” angels of Giotto and to those Michelangelo freed from a block of marble, has always exerted great fascination on artists.

With Rancinan, it is always a question of symbolic Man and his fantasies, of his transcendence and transgressions. There is never any angelic moralizing. Man is no choirboy; he has written history through the force of sheer ambition and curiosity. He has invented botany, built libraries, seen the Earth from afar, landed a spacecraft on a comet 510 million kilometers from home. All this remains true, and yet, people still ask the eternal question – how should we raise a child?

This work speaks to the inherent paradox of the human condition. Driven by impulse yet controlled by intention, mankind is perpetually caught between the desire to act and control. Unlike other species, he is a victim of darkness and impenetrable complexity, capable of inflicting barbaric cruelty. While he cannot escape his nature, he can spend his life controlling his conscience in the hopes of one day transcending himself.

Exhibitions

Couvent des Cordeliers, Paris, France, June 2015
The Accademia di Belle Arti,
Florence, Italy, April 2016
Urban Spree, Berlin, Germany, May 2016



The Feast of Crumbs, 2014

Argentique print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 3 + 3 EA - 180 x 297 cm - 70.9 x 116.9 in.

Birth of the Angel, 2015

Argentive print mounted on plexiglas
in artist's frame, edition of 8 + 4 EA
125 x 125 cm - 49.2 x 49.2 in.

Exhibitions

Couvent des Cordeliers, Paris, France, June 2015
The Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence, Italy, April 2016
Urban Spree, Berlin, Germany, May 2016



The Messenger I, 2014

Argentive print mounted on plexiglas
in artist's frame, edition of 6 + 4 EA
200 x 150 cm - 78.7 x 59.1 in.

Exhibitions

Couvent des Cordeliers, Paris, France, June 2015
The Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence, Italy, April 2016
Urban Spree, Berlin, Germany, May 2016





The Guide, 2014

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 8 + 4 EA - 125 x 125 cm - 49.2 x 49.2 in.

Exhibitions

Couvent des Cordeliers, Paris, France, June 2015
The Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence, Italy, April 2016
Urban Spree, Berlin, Germany, May 2016



The Warrior, 2014

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 8 + 4 EA - 125 x 125 cm - 49.2 x 49.2 in.

Exhibitions

Couvent des Cordeliers, Paris, France, June 2015
The Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence, Italy, April 2016
Urban Spree, Berlin, Germany, May 2016

Bird of Life, 2014

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 3 + 3 EA
180 x 180 cm - 70.9 x 70.9 in.

Exhibitions

Couvent des Cordeliers, Paris, France, June 2015
The Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence, Italy, April 2016
Urban Spree, Berlin, Germany, May 2016



WONDERFUL WORLD

Life is one big amusement park...

When men have finally freed themselves from all responsibility and commitment, when they have unburdened themselves from notions of courage and glory, they will at last be able to exist in an entirely manufactured world. Like a giant funfair, this strange universe will play host to idols and personas unlimited by convention; a world in which reality and its limitations are replaced by iconography and end goals. The schizophrenic delirium of its inhabitants provokes an ironic question: is Wonderful World a sarcastic reflection or a troubling reality?

Back from their show in Disneyland, Andy Warhol, James Dean, Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe run out of gas in Death Valley. Professional doubles, they appeared on stage and screen around the world. Others will take their place.

On the Way Back Version 2, 2011

Argentinc print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 8 + 4 EA
125 x 183 cm - 49.2 x 72.1 in.



When it comes to creating idols, Man cannot help himself...
Maybe because he frustratedly seeks an impossible eternity.
In any case, Jesus has competition. And since an icon
never dies, doppelgangers take up the baton...

Le Banquet des idoles variante I, 2012

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 8 + 4 EA
125 x 208 cm - 49.2 x 81.9 in.

Exhibitions

- Triennale di Milano, Milano, Italy, May 2012
- The Future Tense, London, UK, June 2012
- Abattoirs Museum, Toulouse, France, Sept. 2012
- Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum, Bratislava, Slovakia, May-Sept. 2013
- Himalayas Art Museum, Shanghai, China, Sept.-Nov. 2014



Heads of a model family from northern climes, Mr. and Mrs. Batman, perfectly presented as always, are intent on raising their children as strictly as possible. She works in the charity business, he works in finance. They don't want to seem arrogant, but they do like to moralise... Because if they were able to save the world, it would no doubt help them to save themselves!

Mr. and Mrs. Batman are very particular about how they raise the children... The art of singing has been taught in the family for generations now. Nothing has changed. The Batmans want to be a model family!

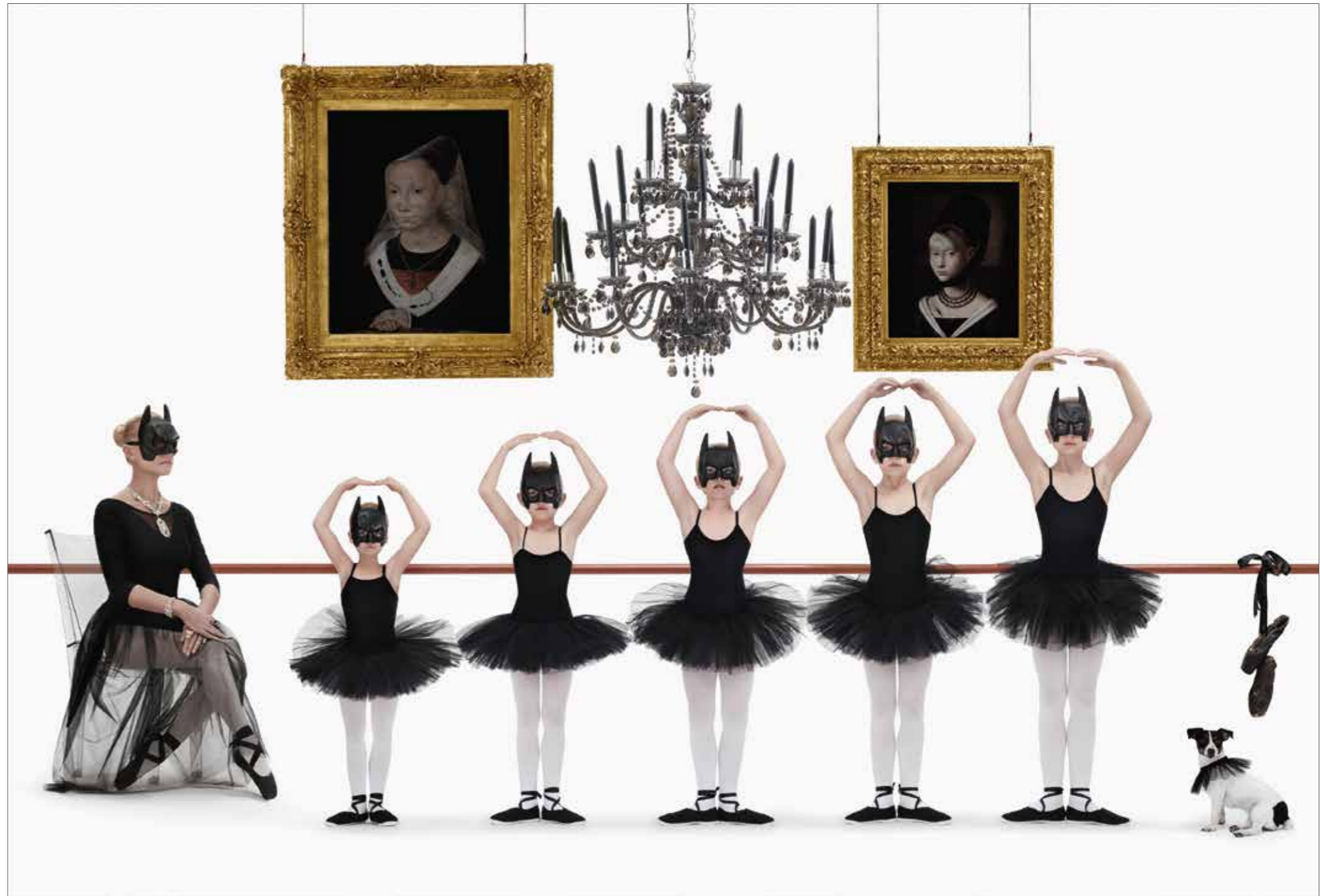
Exhibitions

Triennale di Milano, Milano, Italy, May 2012
The FutureTense, London, UK, June 2012
Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum, Bratislava, Slovakia, May - Sept. 2013
Himalayas Art Museum, Shanghai, China, Sept - Nov. 2014



Batman Family Diptych, 2011

Argentinc print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 8 + 4 EA - 110 x 162 cm (x2) - 43.3 x 63.8 in. (x2)



Batman Family Girls Dance, 2015

Argentinc print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 3 + 3 EA

180 x 264 cm - 70.9 x 103.9 in.

METAMORPHOSIS

Bearing active witness to humanity's great upheavals...

The desire for unalterable beauty; the quest for eternity; the endless longing for a Promised Land, the penchant for self-destruction: these things bequeath us to keep a watchful eye on the changes affecting humanity. Man recognises his ability to annihilate. Caught up in the cogs of an infernal machine, he has become the slave of his own creations. In this series, Rancinan uses details from art history as a way to provoke and reflect on mankind's metamorphosis over time.

How far we've come since the Last Supper... we've invented fun, brightly coloured food. We've smoothed out the taste of what we eat: not too sweet, not too savoury. The creator of fast food has invited the poorest of the poor to a high-calorie banquet. Guests can enjoy the entire menu for a mere 99 cents. But the host is still svelte and elegant, contenting himself with a frugal, organic meal. At the highest echelons of society, being slim comes at a high price...

Metamorphosis IV - The Big Supper, 2008

Argentite print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 12
75 x 125 cm - 29.5 x 49.2 in.

Exhibitions

Palais de Tokyo Museum, Paris, France, Nov. 2009
Triennale di Milano, Milano, Italy, May 2012
The FutureTense, London, UK, June 2012
Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum, Bratislava, Slovakia, May-Sept. 2013
"Manger des yeux", Palais des Arts et du Festival, Dinard, France, June-Sept. 2014
Himalayas Art Museum, Shanghai, China, Sept.-Nov. 2014



CHAOS

Man and history are shaped by the chaos and turbulence that surrounds them. In this new series, Rancinan speaks to the desires that disrupt the codes of convention. Freed from society's notions of normality, these men herald in generations of change. They are rebels, taking back their freedom and claiming their right to think liberally. The symbol of the riot has become one of self-discovery and reflection, ushering in change in a time of widespread civil disobedience.

Riots take the world by surprise. Violent or peaceful, they usher in a time of civil disobedience. People take to the streets to express themselves directly, reappropriating a territory and an identity.

Riots, 2012

Argentite print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 5
180 x 280 cm - 70.9 x 110.2 in.

Exhibitions

Nieuw Dakota, Fontana Fortuna, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, March 2013
Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum, Bratislava, Slovakia, May-Sept. 2013
Himalayas Art Museum, Shanghai, China, Sept-Nov. 2013



Press Power, 2013
Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 8 + 4 EA
125 x 183 cm - 49.2 x 72.1 in.

Exhibition
Nieuw Dakota, Fontana Fortuna, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, March 2013



SMALL MAN IN A BIG WORLD

With this series, Rancinan offers an intimate and profound vision of Mankind. Dressed in the same, unchanging suit, with its distinctive elegance, this civilized Man is harangued by incessant questions and overwhelmed by the world he has created: the media, virtual intelligence, bio-technologies, constant surveillance, censorship, moral dictators, impostures, political spin, a value system that's been turned upside down, conservative thinking, a 'money-is-king' philosophy...

Rancinan plays with his protagonists' relationship to society like he plays with proportions in his work. This "Little Big Man" in a corporate suit sometimes likes to hide himself in the corners of the canvas' frame. The vivacity of the artist as a witness of his times is always felt; but here, humanity is broached with such incredible, poetic talent. As if the artist was trying to give his characters another chance...



Man in Motion #31, 2013

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 3 + 3 EA - 80 x 300 cm - 31.5 x 118.1 in.

Exhibitions

Patinoire Royale Art Center, Brussels, Belgium, March 2014
Sinan Mansions Art Center, Shanghai, China, Sept-Nov. 2014

OCEAN

“Ocean” is a very personal series, completed over a fifteen-year period in a studio in the South of France that I’ve kept secret all these years. From the top of a sand dune climbed many times since my tender childhood, I can see the Ocean, its stormy rage or calm tranquility; its horizon; its high and low tides. Both constant and constantly changing, this has always been my “secret garden”, my haven and my inspiration.



Ocean #4461 Day One, 2012

Argentique print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, unique piece - 160 x 304 cm - 63 x 119.7 in.

Exhibition

Oceanographic Museum, Monaco, Oct. 2015

Ocean #4478 Day Two, 2012

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, unique piece

160 x 304 cm - 63 x 119.7 in.

Exhibition

Oceanographic Museum, Monaco, Oct. 2015



PORTRAIT

From a simple portrait to a unique artistic performance

Rancinan has photographed numerous high-profile individuals and historical moments since 1975, capturing the Zeitgeist surrounding such icons as Fidel Castro and the Dalai Lama. In the portrait of Chinese artist Yan Pei Ming, shown on the next page, Rancinan once again captures the genius of the artist for the sake of posterity.

This monumental photograph was selected by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the official image of the COP21 UN Climate Change Conference held in 2015 in Paris. It was unveiled and presented to the 140 state leaders attending the COP21 conference, and exhibited in the main plenary chamber. On the left side of the photograph is a tree whose leaves have been replaced by plastic bags. On the right side of the photo is a child harmoniously awakening to the world. In the middle, a solitary butterfly offering hope for the future of our environment.

And Everything Will Start Again, 2015

Argentic print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 6 + 4 EA
150 x 250 cm - 59.1 x 98.4 in.

Exhibition

Exhibited during Cop 21 in Paris and presented in front of all the representants of United Nations in December 2015

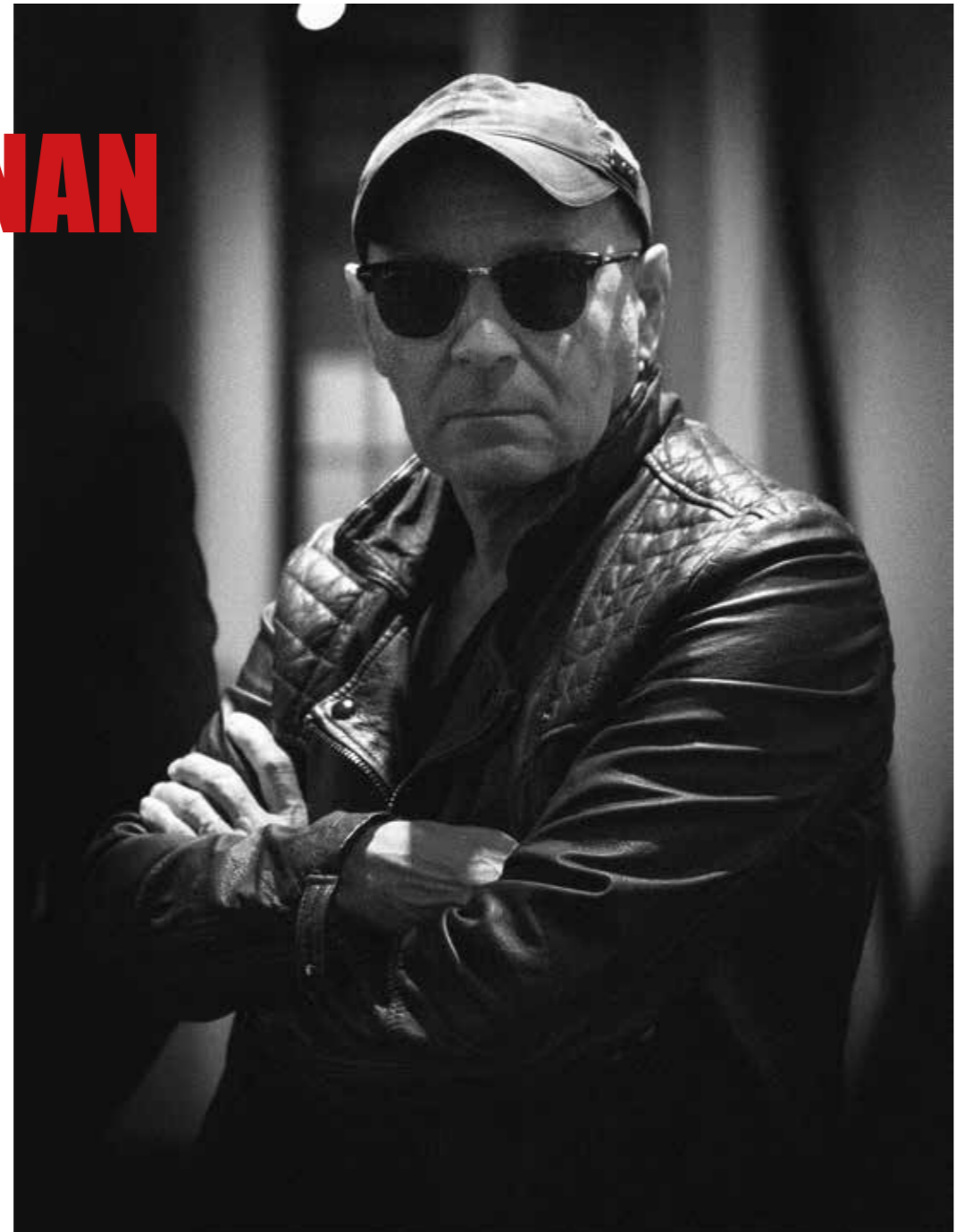




Yan Pei Ming Variante I Triptych, 2010

Argentinc print mounted on plexiglas in artist's frame, edition of 8 + 4 EA - 125 x 125 cm (x3) - 49.2 x 49.2 in. (x3)

RANCINAN



© Sandra Marie

BIOGRAPHY

Born in the Bordeaux region, France, Gérard Rancinan travels the globe, bearing first-hand witness to events of historical importance, coming face to face with the complexity of the human condition. Capturing natural catastrophes, civil and ethnic wars, and urban riots through his lens, Rancinan's imperious need to interpret the world has produced startling images filtered through a unique aesthetic and journalistic prism. His photographs of athletes, artists, ecclesiastics and politicians are celebrated as richly artistic and historical investigations of contemporary portraiture, earning him four first prizes for the prestigious World Press Photo Awards. In *Trilogy of the Moderns*, Rancinan posits a keen observation of the contemporary mentality through biting depiction of the world we live in.

Rancinan's work has been exhibited at the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona; the Triennale de Milano, Milan; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; as well as in numerous private galleries and collections worldwide. In 2008, he became the highest ranked photographer in France following the Drouot sale of *Raft of Illusions* at the Etude Millon auction. His piece *Batman Girls* sold for a record price in London 2012, through Phillips de Pury, while *Feast of Barbarians*, sold in 2014 by the Etude Pillon in Versailles, achieved the highest price for any living French photographer.

Gérard Rancinan is an Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters.

WORK

As a fine art photographer, Rancinan's fastidiously composed photographs are instruments of an intentional, sensitive view of the world we inhabit. Incorporating traditional modes of photography with inventive narratives and compositions, Rancinan's work stands out in today's photographic canons.

Rancinan's work reaches far beyond face-value representations of reality. They are, rather than poetic propositions, fragments of an enlightened vision of our times. Inspired by masters from Velázquez to Géricault and including personal encounters with Robert Rauschenberg and Paul McCarthy, his pre-meditated creations explore the Zeitgeist through raw and destabilising imagery.

AWARDS

2013 >

Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters

2007 >

Lead Academy Award - Stern Magazine

2006 >

Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters

1989 >

World Press - 1st prize Sports Stories

World Press - 1st prize Arts Stories

World Press - 1st prize News Stories

1987 >

World Press - 1st prize Sports Stories

1986 >

Grand Prix Européen de la photographie de plateau

1984 >

World Press - 1st prize Sports Stories

Coordinators: Sylvain Gaillard, Aurélie Heuzard, Sandra Marie

Author: Caroline Gaudriault

Designer: Nicolas Imbert

Translator: Amanda Mc Lane

Printer: Delta Printing Press LLC

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