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Michael Lau. *In the Garden*. 2022. Acrylic on canvas, 70% × 70% inches (180 × 180 cm) © Michael Lau. Courtesy LGDR

Michael Lau: In the Garden

July 15 – August 27
LGDR & Wei 2 Ice House Street
Central Hong Kong

With flowers in the face, minds will be in the garden.

— Michael Lau

LGDR & Wei is pleased to present *In the Garden*, an exhibition of 18 new works from Hong Kong-based contemporary artist Michael Lau's *Flower* series. Lau began the series in 2020, engaging figurative floral portraits, vivid color, and text to convey a philosophy he summarizes with the statement, "With flowers in the face, minds will be in the garden"—a call for positivity in facing the challenges of today's world. Combining personal life experiences with signature elements of street life and pop culture, Lau boldly renders feelings of optimism, joy, and hope.

In the *Flower* series, Lau deconstructs art historical masterpieces and everyday subject matter, combining them and reframing familiar tableaux into blossoming, surreal juxtapositions of images and text in an aesthetic that hovers between abstraction and figuration. The artworks on view in the exhibition at LGDR & Wei introduce the latest evolution in Lau's approach—close-up portrayals of individual flowers that nevertheless remain rooted in his early practice, artistic training, and formative experience creating three-dimensional artworks, in response to the artist's 1999 solo exhibition *Gardeners*, a utopia of youth, friendship and fantasy.



Michael Lau. *The Flowery Surprise*. 2022. Acrylic on canvas, 73¼ × 236¼ inches (200 × 600 cm) © Michael Lau. Courtesy LGDR

The exhibition's centerpiece is *The Flowery Surprise* (2022), a six-meter triptych that pays homage to Leonardo da Vinci's 15th-century masterpiece *The Last Supper* in a scene reimagined with personified flowers. Michael Lau retains the curiosity of the characters while dissolves the tension in the original work with humor. Infusing the background with light, Lau inserts collage-like blank price tags, brightly painted and surreally juxtaposed with misspelled texts that form slogans, as well as vases derived from street fashion. The flower corresponding to the position of Judas is painted in white, representing innocence and kindness, while the salt that Judas accidentally spilled on the table—a Western metaphor of misfortune—is replaced by a four-leaf clover, symbolizing luck. Signature to the *Flower* series, a galaxy is painted in the eye of a singular flower, in this case, the red flower occupying Jesus' original position, suggesting infinite imagination and immortality. At the lower right corner of the painting, a cameo representing the artist himself stands quietly on the table, gazing at the group of flowers, seeming to ponder which one will ultimately outshine the others.

Another highlight is *Michael Flrwoe* (2022), a self-portrait that pays tribute to Vincent van

Gogh. Deploying playful abstract brushstrokes, Lau inserts the flower in the place of Van Gogh's emblematic pipe, nodding to the renowned Post-Impressionist's influence. "Van Gogh is an absolute pioneer; his flowers are classic and iconic. As a later follower born on the same date as the master, I hope to show my respect, and pass on his spirits through further developments", says Lau. Other works on the theme of passing on wisdom include *3 Wise Flowers*, a work inspired by *The Analects of Confucius*, which celebrates etiquette; *Lend a Hand*, which advocates support systems; *Seeding Phenomenon*, a work about legacies of cultural inheritance; and *Serenity Desired*, which promotes spiritual cultivation.



Michael Lau. *Too Shy to Say*. 2022.
Acrylic on canvas, 70% x 63 inches (180 x 160 cm)
© Michael Lau. Courtesy LGDR



Michael Lau. *I Hope You Stay*. 2022.
Acrylic on canvas, 70% x 63 inches (180 x 160 cm)
© Michael Lau. Courtesy LGDR



Michael Lau. *Come Out & Play*. 2022.
Acrylic on canvas, 70% x 63 inches (180 x 160 cm)
© Michael Lau. Courtesy LGDR

As a classic motif in art history, the imagery of flowers has a natural association with expressions of love and joy. *In the Garden* also features three sensational paintings that indicate different stages of love. With *Too Shy to Say*, *I Hope You Stay* and *Come out and Play*, three paintings inspired by pop song lyrics, the artist explores the complexities of love through color: timid pink, anxious purple, and fervent red subtly evoke the romantic states of crush, longing, waiting, anxiety, missing, and joy. Another group of four floral "headshot" paintings reveal Lau's "recipe of happiness." Titled *Dopamine*, *Endorphin*, *Serotonin* and *Oxytocin*, the paintings layer terminologies onto the orchid, tulip, rose and sunflower respectively, reaffirming the instinctive association between flowers and happiness across both science and culture.

About LGDR & Wei

LGDR & Wei was founded by Dominique Lévy, Brett Gorvy, Amalia Dayan, Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, and Rebecca Wei. As a collaborative international art venture that brings expertise and vision to its disciplines, LGDR represents and partners with artists and estates—realizing seminal projects and furthering legacies. From placing primary and secondary works of the highest quality and advising clients on the development of their collections, to harnessing its institutional relationships and presenting a curated program with scholarly publications, LGDR puts artistic voices first. In forming LGDR & Wei, the five founders merge their respective specialties across 20th- and 21st-century art; their individual reputations as market leaders and tastemakers; and their separate histories as gallery principals and auction house specialists. Both international and local in practice and perspective, LGDR also has unique spaces and unmatched market knowledge in New York, London, and Paris in addition to off-site presentations and satellite teams around the world.



Michael Lau

About the artist

Born in 1970, contemporary artist Michael Lau lives and works in Hong Kong. Lau studied illustration at the First Institute of Art & Design Hong Kong and graduated in 1992. In 1999 the artist had his solo exhibition *Gardener* at Hong Kong Arts Centre, where the urban vinyl figurines on display made a name for Lau, who later led the global upsurge of collectible designer toys as an independent creator. Over the course of almost 30 years, Michael Lau has consciously positioned himself between contemporary art and pop culture, and constantly explored visual possibilities where traditional art forms and street elements collide. Applying spray-painting, smearing, and collages to the canvas, Lau created his avant-garde painting series, including *Flower*, *First Encounter*, *Soliloquy* and *Method*, to reflect on his life experiences and philosophical thoughts on social topics in the contemporary world.

Lau's works are held in permanent collections of museums and institutions, including the K11 Art Foundation (Hong Kong) and Deji Art Museum (Nanjing). His work has recently been featured in exhibitions including *Collect Them All!* (Beijing, 2022), *Maxx Headroom* (Hong Kong, 2021), *COLLECT THEM ALL!* (Shanghai, 2019), *Oh My Toy!* (London, 2018) and *COLLECT THEM ALL!* (Hong Kong, 2018). In 2023, a retrospective will be held in Shanghai to systematically survey his three-decade oeuvre and contributions to the field.

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