ALMINE RECH

Day for Night: New American Realism

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Brian Calvin, Richard Prince and George Condo are part of the exhibition *Day for Night: New American Realism*, at Palazzo Barberini, Rome, Italy.

The exhibition *Day for Night: New American Realism* presents more than 150 works from the Aïshti Foundation's collection of contemporary art. Launched twenty-five years ago by Italian-Lebanese businessman Tony Salamé, this foundation has become a truly dynamic force for art in the Middle East and beyond. At its headquarters in Beirut – designed in 2015 by David Adjaye Architects – it regularly presents major thematic exhibitions and important solo shows, while through its support for other institutions, the foundation works with museums around the world.

The exhibition borrows its title from a work by New York artist Lorna Simpson, but also refers to a film technique. "Day for night" is a cinematic trick that makes it possible to shoot night scenes in broad daylight. The term was made famous by a 1973 François Truffaut film with the same title; in French, day for night is known as nuit américaine, "American night" – an image well suited to the chiaroscuro visions of these artists, who, over the last few decades, have worked to capture the reality of the United States in its complexity.

Presented in the extraordinary setting of Palazzo Barberini, *Day for Night* explores a cross-section of contemporary American art, focusing on the work of artists who tackle the crucial question of realism and the representation of truth. Taking an intergenerational approach, *Day for Night* includes pieces by emerging artists who are experimenting with new approaches to figurative art, presented alongside the work of important predecessors who set the scene for many heated debates about verism and representation.

The gradual erosion of the concept of truth that has characterized American culture in recent years has paradoxically coincided with a return to figuration by many contemporary artists. While concepts such as "alternative facts" and "post-truths" have gained ground in American public opinion, many artists have embarked on a complex investigation of what realism means, especially in the realm of contemporary painting.

This exploration of realism finds a strikingly original setting in the galleries of Palazzo Barberini, which hold the world's largest collection of Caravaggisti. These artists, drawn to Rome from across Europe in the early seventeenth century, built on Caravaggio's revolutionary vision to introduce a new, naturalistic depiction of reality, sparking what could be considered, to use an anachronism, the first international art movement.

The exhibition unfolds across three floors of Palazzo Barberini, beginning in the twelve rooms of the ground-floor exhibition area and continuing through some of the museum's most emblematic spaces, including several monumental rooms on the piano nobile – the Bernini Atrium, the Oval Room, the Marble Room, and the Borromini Atrium – to conclude on the floor above in the Appartamento Settecentesco. This Rococo interior, the only one of its kind in Rome, will be regularly open to the public for the first time during this exhibition.

Amid dramatic Baroque spaces and eccentric eighteenth-century decor, *Day for Night* introduces visitors to the latest developments in American art. They are presented alongside the architecture and collections of Palazzo Barberini, in a rich exploration of the many ties – from the seventeenth century to the present – that have woven together power, spectacle, and the representation of reality.