

Daniel ARSHAM

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Daniel Arsham's First Major U.S. Museum Show Celebrates the Artist's Diverse Practice

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Installation view: "Daniel Arsham: Wherever You Go, There You Are," (2023). Orange County Museum of Art.
PHOTO: YUBO DONG, OFSTUDIO

Daniel Arsham's First Major U.S. Museum Show Celebrates the Artist's Diverse Practice

**Spanning everything from painting, sculpture, automotive design,
clothing, sneakers, and jewelry, this new exhibition is on view at
the Orange County Museum of Art through June 4**

BY PAUL LASTER

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Celebrated for his dynamic sculptures of decaying technological devices and crumbling cultural artifacts, Daniel Arsham makes art that looks as though it has just been discovered in an archeological dig. Equally known in the dance, fashion, and design worlds for his collaborations with Merce Cunningham, Dior, Tiffany, Adidas, Porsche and Kith as he is for his numerous gallery solo shows at Ron Mandos, Nanzuka and Perrotin, the talented artist and designer is now being honored with his first American solo museum show—titled “Wherever You Go, There You Are” and curated by Heidi Zuckerman—at the Orange County Museum of Art (OCMA) in Costa Mesa, California.

“One of the things that I like to do—in addition to presenting an artist’s first one-person museum exhibition—is to add to the dialogue around the work in order to hopefully have people think about the work differently,” Zuckerman tells *Galerie*. “Daniel has had collaboration at the core of his practice from the very beginning with his work with Merce Cunningham and he was an early adopter of collaborations with well-known brands. The art world can sometimes get a single idea about an artist, but Daniel has been making traditional sculptures, paintings and drawings from the start. The sheer excitement of some of the collaborations has maybe overshadowed the sculpture practice. I thought that now would be an interesting time to look at his work holistically.”



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Featuring some 45 artworks created over the past 20 years, the first part of the exhibition explores the artist's concept of fictional archeology. Selected by Zuckerman, OCMA's CEO and director, the succinct show highlights his early paintings on paper of architectural structures in the Everglades, which the artist often explored in his youth; eroded sculptures of Pokémon characters and cards, which he collected as a teen; a decaying Delorean sports car, which fits Arsham's "Back to the Future" concept for casting everyday objects in hydrostone and bronze in a way that they might look when unearthed 1000 years from now.

A second section of the exhibition features an arresting installation designed by the artist, and offers an overview of Arsham's brand collaborations, which

includes his role as the creative director of the Cleveland Cavaliers, and his recent fashion and furniture designs.

“This is the first exhibition in a museum that doesn’t focus on new work for me,” Arsham shares. “It covers every medium that I have worked in over the last 20 years—everything from painting, sculpture, automotive design, clothing, sneakers, jewelry, collaborations, and my ventures into sports. I think it’s going to allow audiences to really understand the full scope of my interests.”



Daniel Arsham, *Amethyst Crystallized Seated Pikachu*, (2020).

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PERROTIN

Born in Cleveland in 1980 and raised in Miami, Arsham studied at the Design and Architecture High School before heading to New York on a scholarship to Cooper Union, where he earned a BFA in 2003. Exhibiting his work even before finishing college, he moved back to Miami after college and co-founded an adventurous artist-run gallery, Placemaker, in the city's up-and-coming Design District. It was in Miami where Perrotin discovered the emerging artist's work, which has led to countless group exhibitions, frequent art fair presentations and 16 solo shows with the gallery in its numerous locations around the world.



Daniel Arsham, *Cypress*, 2006.

PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION, FLORIDA

The 2006 Everglades paintings, *Cypress*, *Pond* and *X*, which are part of his OCMA show, were created in his Miami period, before he moved his studio back to New York. Depicting geometric structures in swamps, they're the perfect visual metaphor for Miami's origin while reflecting the artist's ongoing interest in architecture. A year later, Arsham co-founded the design firm Snarkitecture with his Cooper Union classmate Alex Mustonen—a collaboration that's led to architecture and design projects worldwide, including the Kith stores in New York, Tokyo and Paris.

A pair of paintings of the surface of the moon—one with a slice cut out of the orbiting satellite—complement the selection of paintings in the show, which primarily focuses on Arsham as a contemporary sculptor and designer.

There's a series of sculptures of popular items that have already become relics, such as a rotary dial phone and pair of payphones from 2013 and a Polaroid camera, Walkman and classic boombox from 2014 that the artist has cast as eroded archeological finds, embedded with crystals and glacial rocks, as though they have been discovered in the future.



Daniel Arsham, *Hammock*, (2007).

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PERROTIN

The 2007 plaster relief *Hammock* captures a stretched-out figure pinned to the wall by a tarp or sheet and the artist revisits this sculptural motif in the 2023 standing sculpture *Hollow Figure*, which depicts a person wrapped by a wind-blown sheet. It's a motif that he has investigated repeatedly, as it references his living through the massively powerful and destructive category five storm, Hurricane Andrew, which hit Miami with winds of 165 mph in 1992, when Arsham was at the impressionable age of eleven.

A more recent group of sculptures take plaster casts from museums in France, including the *Venus of Milo* at the Louvre, as the point of departure for life-size eroded statues modeled in hydrostone and embedded with pyrite, quartz, selenite and volcanic ash. They are thoughtfully arranged together in a gallery at the museum like *The Three Graces*, a subject that's been painted and sculpted by many past masters, including Botticelli, Rubens and Niki de Saint Phalle. "It's a way of showing that not only is his work about the present and this future archeology, it's also very much informed by the past," Zuckerman revealed during our conversation.



Daniel Arsham, *Hourglass IX*, (2018).
PHOTO: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PERROTIN

And even though Arsham states “Time doesn’t have a shape” in the recently published book *Arsham-isms*, a collection of quotes by the artist that was edited by Larry Warsh and published by Princeton University Press, he has given form to it in two other sculptures in the show. His 2018 glass and steel *Hourglass IX* portrays the age-old device for telling time with a sneaker kicking sand on the topside to paradoxically form a camera below. Meanwhile *Falling Clock*, from 2022, another sculptural wall relief, cradles a

clock in a series of drapery folds, a still-life subject that artists have imaginatively been rendering since the beginning of time.

When asked what work she was most happy to have been able to secure for the exhibition, the seasoned curator replied, “The work that I’m most happy to include is the Delorean sculpture. It’s iconic. The show is called “Wherever You Go, There You Are” and the show is very much about time travel. Not necessarily sci-fi time travel, which of course is there, but it’s kind of like metaphysical time travel. That work is really evocative of that idea.”