

Paul PFEIFFER

Hypebeast,

Paul Pfeiffer Dissects the Cult of Celebrity in MOCA Exhibition

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On view at the Geffen Contemporary in DTLA.

Shawn Ghassemitari
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Paul Pfeiffer, *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, 2015. © Paul Pfeiffer. Photo courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery.

American artist Paul Pfeiffer has been interrogating the act of image making for 25 years. Working across a wide range of creative disciplines, he commonly employs found and source material from pop culture to probe into the spectacle of sports and the myth of celebrity.

On view at MOCA's Geffen Contemporary in Los Angeles, Pfeiffer presents a thorough look into his nearly three decade career. As the first US retrospective on the artist, *Prologue to the Story of the Birth of Freedom* unpacks society's obsession with spectacle and how our collective consciousness is constructed through image circulation.

True to his deconstructionist aesthetic, Pfeiffer tinkers with audiences' perceptions by meticulously reframing scenes from years past. *Three Figures in a Room* (2015-18) showcases the highly anticipated 2015 fight between Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao on two large screens — one without sound and the other emitting imitation effects of humans being punched while the body of the aggressor is left invisible.

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (2000-) draws from the biblical accounts in the New Testament Book of Revelation, where an NBA hooper is shown from below leaping towards the basket. But instead of a backboard or jersey to delineate his pursuit, the basketball player is left blank, arms outstretched in a quasi-martyr pose, hovering against a sea of chanting spectators.

“In Pfeiffer’s universe, the boxing ring, the basketball court and the stadium serve not only as platforms for grand spectacles, but as sites where the body politic (of a nation, of a community, of society) is defined and contested,” described MOCA curator Clara Kim. The show’s location isn’t by chance either. Viewed by many as the entertainment capital of the world, Los Angeles is “a city singularly poised to create,” noted MOCA’s director, Johanna Burton, “and manipulate – dreams, symbols, and mythologies, this show will have deep resonance here.”

Prologue to the Story of the Birth of Freedom will be on view in DTLA until June 16, 2024.

The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA

152 N Central Ave

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