



Los Angeles, February 17th 2024

Dearest Emma, I miss you, and think it is time that we get back to work...

About four years ago, in the midst of the pandemic's early days with no one knowing what the future could have held, I received a letter from Marc Camille Chaimowicz, whom I had assisted, about a decade prior, on a Madame Bovary publication by Four Corner Books. It was an invitation and an auspice for a new work, an extension or continuum of the *Emma B* project. 'There is more, as yet to be done', he wrote. And when Chaimowicz calls, you might want to run! If only for taking incommensurable pleasure in the fruits of his labor.

What followed in epistolary form, were images of blooms and moons, and a photographic assignment of Emma Bovary dreaming-and-living California scenarios. The application of a red lipstick and Yves Saint Laurent's Opium perfume, Emma devouring fashion magazines such as *Vogue* (Paris edition preferable) and the *Financial Times*' 'How to Spend It' supplement, the serving of a fruit salad from a large glass bowl, picking wild flowers while kneeling (with the offer of sending paper ones if not readily available), Emma laying on a carpet, wistfully perusing travel guides, languidly window shopping. Her beloved's hand caressing the inside of her wrist – a moment redolent of tenderness. And lots and lots of jewelry, begged, borrowed and possibly stolen, some worn and some displayed.

Dear Marc Camille, If only I, Emma, had known the places my longing would have took me. If only, If only...

Emma's technicolor reverie has landed in Los Angeles in all its melancholic, dreaminess and sumptuousness. Entrapped in her solitude, Emma looks outwards, wistfully...into a landscape, so sublime, so troubling, echoing her own existential dilemmas.

Luckily for me, a few pictures I took made it into the Emma pantheon, with Marc Camille seemingly pleased about her wardrobe choices and that *dear Emma* hadn't forfeited her shopaholic ways, even during lockdown. On view at Gaga Los Angeles as part of a suite of collages made over the past two years, these images combine fragments of fashion magazines, literary prints, advertising and illustrations, overlapping lace, legs, jewelry and work by other artists in a sophisticated layering of Flaubertian flavor. Borne out of *Bovarysme* – the condition of *domination* by such an idealized, glamorized, glorified, or otherwise unreal conception of oneself resulting in dramatic personal conflict, paranoia or tragedy – the collages contribute to an intimate, psychological portrait. If in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, the restrictions of Emma's inner life are narrated through the description of domestic interiors, in Chaimowicz's exhibition, a selection of everyday objects - a flower vase, a *frutero*, folding screens, a magazine rack and a few rugs - accumulates into the depiction of interior life stills, imbued with sentimental depth. The artists offers us a lens onto the pathos and nostalgia we project onto our nearest objects, those we choose to re-present us, to tell stories with.

Thanks to Chaimowicz, Flaubert's anti-heroine had never felt so chic, even if trapped in a life constricted by the conservative conventions of her time. Consumerism (shopping!), seduction (the excitement of ill-fated affairs!) and a world of imagination (ever relieving!) offer our Emma, and ourselves, a sentimental escape from a bleak, monotone reality evocative of both pandemic times, and the doom of current ones. Chaimowicz's world of interiors continues to form my sentimental education, inviting to observe our own melodramas as much as the possibility of elsewhere. I only wish Emma would have stuck around long enough to experience that, too. – Marta Fontolan

GAGA presents: Marc Camille Chaimowicz, *Emma dreaming of California*
February 27th – April 20th, 2024