



From left to right: Tupak Shakur, Paris Hilton and Eminem

dinosaur ravishing a beautiful model and Lil' Kim as the ultimate Vuitton accessory. His hyper-realistic, over-the-top, high-camp images transport one to a colourful world of fantasy, kitsch, erotica and satire — a world where equality between all human beings rings true.

American Photo magazine ranks LaChapelle among the top 10 "most important people in photography" and he is considered to be the most daring and ambitious photographer in the history of portraiture. His work has appeared between the covers of international magazines such as *Interview*, *Italian Vogue*, *French Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, *Rolling Stone*, *Flaunt*, *The Face* and *i-D*. He has also exhibited his work in several commercial galleries and in leading public institutions around the world.

Inspired by everything from art history to pornography, LaChapelle's imaginative photography mirrors all facets of contemporary popular culture today. When asked about his inspiration, he cites Jean-Paul Goude, Diane Arbus, Mondino, and French duo Pierre & Gilles, even though he consciously avoids comparison with the latter. His greatest inspiration is from film and he has great admiration for the work of director Federico Fellini. LaChapelle has been branded the Fellini of photography, and more recently the Magritte of modern-day surrealism.

This photographer has come a long way since his first quasi-glamour gig as a Studio 54 busboy. In 1978, he left his North Carolina family home and moved to the Big City. He admits to being a pot-smoking disaster, day-dreaming about supporting himself as a painter or illustrator. He rose to fame after accepting a job to shoot for *Interview* magazine, that was offered to him by Andy Warhol.

Music video directing is his latest endeavour; for select artists like Christina Aguilera, Moby, Jennifer Lopez, Britney Spears, The Vines and No Doubt. "It's My Life" with Gwen Stefani won the award for Best Pop Video at the MTV Music Awards, as well as the MPVA's Director of the Year award in 2004. His stage production for Elton John's *The Red Piano* at Caesar's Palace was the top-selling show in Las Vegas for 2004. *Krumped*, his short documentary film on the groundbreaking dance phenomenon Krumping, was an award winner at Sundance. This led to the feature film *RIZE*, released in 2005 to huge critical acclaim and chosen to open the 2005 Tribeca Film Festival in New York City.

LaChapelle Artists & Prostitutes is published by Taschen, a publisher known for pushing traditional boundaries. Be prepared for a second mortgage on your house though — this luxury item will set you back R12 200. Also by LaChapelle: *LaChapelle Land* [also boxed] and *Hotel LaChapelle*.

CELEBRITY BIBLE

There's something intrinsically fascinating about celebrities, especially when they're photographed by one of the world's best lens-men, writes **Aré van Schalkwyk**

COFFEE tables of the wealthy, prepare for LaChapelle, *Artists & Prostitutes* (published by Taschen), a luxurious limited edition of 2 500 copies worldwide, signed and numbered by the famous photographer. This 698-page, XXL hardcover book in a cloth-covered box contains over 800 full-bleed images — a compilation of the best of LaChapelle's entire career to date. Bound by the same Italian firm that binds outside devotional books for the

Vatican, and huge Korans, the content of this book has far less to do with sobriety than either of the other tomes.

One need only contemplate the title of LaChapelle, *Artists & Prostitutes* to grasp this visionary's perception of celebrity. The list of personalities that has posed in front of his surreal lens is almost endless. Some of his most memorable iconic images are of Eminem holding a phallic, near-exploding stick of dynamite, Tupak Shakur taking a bling bath, Devon Aoki fishing in an art gallery, a