

DENISE DE LA RUE

Born: 1972, Mexico City.

Education: Centro de Arte Mexicano, Mexico City.
Escuela Activa de Fotografía, Mexico City
Academia delle Belle Arti, Florence, Italy

Selected Exhibitions:

- 2013 *Angel Art Auction*, Creative Artists Agency, Los Angeles, CA.
2010 *SHOOT!* Imago Galleries, Palm Desert, CA
2008 *Matador*, Denise De La Rue, Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA.
2005 "Mextilo" Centro Nacional de las Artes, Mexico City, Mexico.

About the Artist

A resident of Mexico City, Denise De La Rue is known for her interest in outsider groups within Latin American cultures. In 2006, she started to make portraits of Mexican and Spanish matadors. Bullfighting is an extremely contentious tradition. Both Jose Ignacio Uceda Leal, Madrid, Spain and David Luguillan, Madrid, Spain (both 2006) capture the flamboyant and dramatic identities of bullfighters, yet they are also portrayed as anachronisms - aging icons of a spectacle deeply rooted in the past. Part warrior and part ballet dancer, they are lionized as much for their stylish posturing and costumes as for their sport, which has long been the subject of disapproval outside of Spain and Latin America. Framed against the time-worn backdrops of old palaces and museums, the focus of these portraits is, ultimately, the faded glamour and lost bravado of the bullfighter.

De La Rue's *Matador* series offers a glimpse into the complex social and moral implications of modern bullfighting, a cultural cornerstone of the Hispanic world. She portrays the mythic bullfighters of Mexico and Spain immediately after the fight, often bloodied. Her large-scale photographs dissect the constructed façade of the fight to provoke new perceptions of familiar images.

Removed from the immediacy of the ring, De La Rue places the matadors in settings that are reminiscent of Baroque portrait painting. Museums and mirrored dressing rooms draped with tapestries are backdrops depicting religious scenes. De La Rue uses her primarily male subjects to examine the accepted tenets of the bullfighting culture and to expose the dualities embedded in this historic tradition. She explores the dual identity of these heroes of the past, part ballet dancer - beautiful in their ornate dress and elegant dance in the ring; part warrior - locked in mortal combat with the toro bravo. At the same time, she asks viewers to consider both the lionization of the fighters in Hispanic cultures and the pervasive disapproval of the sport by the rest of the world.