

AUTOMOTIVE

Surrealism stages latest showcase from Mercedes-Maybach

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Cubism, surrealism and futurism respectively guide the three works. Image courtesy of Mercedes-Maybach/David LaChapelle

By ZACH JAMES

German automaker Mercedes-Maybach is continuing a long-running collaboration during Milan Design Week.

Partnering with American photographer and film director David LaChapelle for the first time in 15 years, the brand is presenting three avant-garde art pieces. Located within The Gallery Meravigli's event space, live versions of the printed works are on display alongside the compositions themselves, turning a stagnant exhibition into an experiential touchpoint for the exclusive selection of high-end clientele allowed inside.

Crossing boundaries

The activation, referred to as Welcome to Beyond, sees Mercedes-Maybach uplift each piece, all of which take on a different art movement from the early 20th century.

With this action, the company and Mr. LaChapelle are picking up where they left off in 2009, as their previous collaboration juxtaposed the opulence of Germany in the 1920s and the war-torn landscapes of the 1930s, bringing the Maybach brand back to its roots laid during the Weimar Republic. Unveiled at Art Basel Miami Beach over a decade ago, their throwback-themed partnership now continues during Milan Design Week.

Mercedes-Maybach presents the exhibition in new visuals

"Mercedes-Maybach has a great tradition of investing in artists and supporting the fine arts," said Mr. LaChapelle, in a statement.

"By cultivating a world of engineers, designers and artists, Maybach inspires creativity within their products and beyond," he said. "It is an honor to be part of the Maybach legacy and play in that beyond!"

Now, it embraces three distinct styles, all of which are specified in the works' respective titles.

The first of the pieces, named "Cubist Space," utilizes a variety of geometric patterns and shapes, all colored in a collection of vibrant shades, with a palette spanning from cyan to red and everything in between. Models in skintight gold and purple jumpsuits contort their bodies in several ways, all of whom point toward a black Mercedes-Maybach S-class sedan, contrasting with the lively hues.



"Cubist Space" takes on a metallic sheen in reference to several notable artists from the cubism movement. Image courtesy of Mercedes-Maybach/David LaChapelle

Vehicles from the manufacturer's fleet are present in each of the photographs.

Taking cues from Egyptology, "Future Scape" showcases a yellow and orange desert landscape with signatures of Egyptian cultures, like the pyramids, pharaohs and deities next to modern and alien technology. The Mercedes-Maybach EQS SUV is pictured alongside multiple types of UFOs, a nod to a prominent fixture of the Futurism movement.

Rounding out the selection is "Surreal Scape," which tributes the work of surrealist artists like Salvador Dal. Men in suits pose on poles sticking out of melting apples think Dal's melting clocks or "The Persistence of Memory" ballerinas in tutus dance on beach-like terrain and the Mercedes-Maybach GLS is balanced on a scale by a massive marionette hand.

Large-scale performed versions of the photographs are on display within the exclusive opening at The Gallery Meravigli, with models, props and the respective featured vehicles appearing in the space. Each of the actors is outfitted in looks created by Colleen Atwood, a four-time Academy Award winner for "Best Costume Design" for the films *Memories of a Geisha*, the 2002 version of *Chicago*, 2010s *Alice in Wonderland* and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.



Oscar-winning talent helps uplift the activation. Image courtesy of Mercedes-Maybach/David LaChapelle

Debuted with a cocktail party premiere showing on April 16, the exhibition will be available until the end of Milan Design Week on April 21. Following the end of the event, the pieces will join the Mercedes-Benz Art Collection and travel the world, being shown off for various occasions.

"Culture and creativity are at the heart of Mercedes-Maybach, but so is pushing boundaries in automotive and beyond," said Daniel Lescow, head of Mercedes-Maybach, in a statement.

“We are delighted to reunite with our long-term partner and pioneer artist David LaChapelle, to create a one-of-a-kind Maybach brand experience.”

Activations galore

Through cubism, Futurism and Surrealism, Mercedes-Maybach touches on the core ideas being explored by various maisons for the 2024 edition of Milan Design Week.



Interactivity is a pillar of many activations at this year's rendition of the annual gathering. Image courtesy of Mercedes-Maybach

French fashion and leather goods house Hermès is displaying various pieces from its home collection, each sporting a modernist aesthetic ([see story](#)). These kinds of touches were prominent factors in the futurist movement, as technology and craftsmanship are at the center of the brand's presentation as well as the artistic style.

Similarly, the clean lines and contemporary touches of Japanese automaker Lexus' art exhibition ([see story](#)) and the duality of work within it relate to cubist codes, though on a much looser basis.

The same can be said for Italian fashion company Moncler's takeover of Milano Centrale, the largest railway station in Europe, as works from a variety of artists showcase various styles, including surrealism. Themed after a "dreamscape," the activation takes shape as a takeover of billboards, screens and portraits within the public space ([see story](#)).

Mercedes-Maybach's commission from Mr. LaChapelle is merely the latest in a century-long line of connections to the artistic world, a field that luxury ([see story](#)) and its clientele ([see story](#)) embrace on a near-constant basis. Celebrating both history and creativity, Welcome to Beyond stands as a look at the company's current offerings through an early 20th-century lens, something sure to appeal to the core customer base the manufacturer is targeting.