The Chinati Foundation Announces a Special Exhibition of Work by John Chamberlain and a Major New Commission by Sarah Crowner

On View from October 2022 through Summer 2024 in Marfa, Texas

Marfa, Texas (October 17, 2022) — The Chinati Foundation/La Fundación Chinati announces a special exhibition of sculptures and photographs by John Chamberlain from the collection and a major new commission by Sarah Crowner. Chamberlain is one of the three artists Donald Judd had in mind, along with himself and Dan Flavin, when he founded Chinati as a situation for large-scale, permanent installations. Crowner is an abstract painter whose open approach has led her to work in the contexts of theater and dance, architecture and ceramics. This intergenerational pairing presents the work of two artists—who both imbue painting with the physicality of sculpture—together, in dialogue, within a shared space. The exhibition remains on view in the special exhibition building through the early summer of 2024.

Occupying a space in between abstract painting and sculpture, four polychrome wall reliefs by John Chamberlain—who famously used junked cars as material—demonstrate why he was such a pivotal artist for Judd’s generation. Twenty photographs display a lesser-known aspect of Chamberlain’s art. Starting in the 1970s, Chamberlain began taking pictures using a Widelux camera. The camera’s mechanical swing lens captures a panoramic image, like a roving eye or very short film. Chamberlain, however, didn’t look through the viewfinder: “The Widelux has a lens that you don’t have to focus. It’s just exposure and time.” Holding the camera in front of his body, he took pictures that ripple with movement and swimming light, while simultaneously locating the artist “at someplace that I like.” Hotel rooms, restaurants, bars, and the studio appear to be favorite haunts.
Sarah Crowner’s Platform (Blue Green Terracotta for JC) is a site-specific installation for the museum’s special exhibition building. It consists of two thousand square feet of handmade tiles, glazed turquoise blue, on a massive wooden platform. The artist intends for visitors to step up onto the piece, like a stage, and become immersed in saturated color, glowing light, and interactive shapes. These are the very same abstractions Crowner also brings to her works on canvas.

“A major new commission by a woman artist, the handmade sensibility of Sarah Crowner’s art, and the connection to Mexico, where the tiles were crafted by Cerámica Suro, are all significant for Chinati,” says curator Ingrid Schaffner.

Dedicated to John Chamberlain, Platform (Blue Green Terracotta for JC) may also intriguingly be seen to surface a little-known project by Chamberlain. At one point, he planned to build an underwater ceramic sculpture environment in an abandoned swimming pool on Chinati’s grounds. In light of which, Crowner’s sparkling pool of tile, which casts a halo of blue on the gallery walls, appears like a mirage.

John Chamberlain (born 1927 in Rochester, Indiana; died 2011 in New York) studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and Black Mountain College. In 1964, he represented the United States at the Venice Biennale, and in 1966, he received a Guggenheim Fellowship, the first of many awards to follow. Major retrospectives of Chamberlain’s art include those organized by the Guggenheim Museum in 1971 and 2012 and one at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in 1986, which was accompanied by a catalogue raisonné of his sculpture. An exhibition and workshop based on his experiments with Widelux photography—in collaboration with Larry Bell and Julia Fahey—was held in 1979 at White Columns, in New York. In 2005, Chinati presented Foam Sculptures 1966–1979 and Photographs 1989–2005, a pair of simultaneous installations that yielded a symposium and two publications. This year, Chinati completed a major restoration of the John Chamberlain Building, one of the largest installations of the artist’s work on permanent view.

Sarah Crowner (born 1974 in Philadelphia; lives in New York) studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, Paris, and received her MFA from Hunter College, New York. In 2012, her scenography for Perfect Lives (Vidas Perfectas), Robert Ashley’s 1983 opera staged in Spanish by Alex Waterman, was presented at Ballroom Marfa. In 2018, her set decor and costumes for choreographer Jessica Lang’s Garden Blue premiered with the American Ballet Theatre. A 2020 Rome Prize Fellow, she participated in the 57th Carnegie International and was a 2022 artist in residence at Chinati. Crowner’s platform tile installation for her 2016 exhibition Beetle in the Leaves remains on view at MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts. Her first museum exhibition to take place in Mexico opens at the Museo Amparo, Puebla, in December 2022, and will feature a major tile installation.

The Sarah Crowner commission at Chinati was made possible with dedicated support from Bob Ackerley, Joseph DiCristina, Galerie Nordenhake, Hauser & Wirth, Hill Art Foundation, The Kraus Family Foundation, Kathleen Irvin Loughlin and Christopher Loughlin, Lawrence Luhring and Roland Augustine, Nancy A. Nasher and David J. Haemisegger Collection, and Christian and Rebecca Patry.

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About the Chinati Foundation
The Chinati Foundation/La Fundación Chinati is a museum created by the artist Donald Judd in Marfa, Texas. The specific intention of Chinati is to preserve and present to the public permanent, large-scale installations by a select group of artists, in which the art, the architecture, and the land are inextricably linked. Artists in the collection include Donald Judd, along with Carl Andre, Ingólfur Arnarsson, John Chamberlain, Dan Flavin, Roni Horn, Robert Irwin, Ilya Kabakov, Richard Long, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, David Rabinowitch, and John Wesley. Public tours and viewing of the collection, the conservation of artworks, education programs, artists’ residencies, special exhibitions, lectures, performances, and publications are all vital facets of Chinati’s mission.

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