

CHARLES RAY

CAPSULE COLLECTION 2011

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EMPEROR NEW CLOTHES

Emperor New Clothes is an unrealized project. Several years ago, the Greek art collector Mr. Dakis Joannou asked me to curate a project for his fashion foundation in Athens. My project would have been one in a series of other projects commissioned to artists and designers in and around the art world. The idea was to choose and respond to items selected from fashion collections. The items and the artworks would become the property of the foundation and be exhibited by Mr. Dakis Joannou. My idea was to respond to what I saw as a less than healthy affair between art and fashion. Mr. Dakis Joannou generously allowed me to proceed anyway I saw fit. In collaboration with Maurizio Vetrugno, a collector of fashion, I selected several items of clothing and jewellery from his collection. He shipped the items to Los Angeles and I hired several actors and actresses to model. I worked with the enchanting fairy tale known as the *Emperor's New Clothes*. Charlatans convince the Emperor that he has been fitted in a set of new clothes made from the finest fabric in the world, garments truly befitting for a man of his great stature. He is, of course, wearing nothing at all and the tale allows children to understand that we often see only what we want to see, even with the benefit of perfect eyesight. My models spent several days trying on clothes from Maurizio Vetrugno's collection. The day my fashion photographer arrived on site, my models simply acted as if they were wearing those wonderful garments and classic jewellery. I envisioned the result to be like a mail order catalogue inserted in the local paper. Once this catalogue was printed and folded I asked Mr. Dakis Joannou to have it inserted in the Kathimerini newspaper Sunday edition. Halfway through the curation of this project, the economic crisis hit. I felt this made my catalogue even more poignant. The editorial board felt otherwise and declined to distribute my project. Mr. Dakis Joannou generously followed my wishes and did not distribute the catalogue in a manner that would compromise the spirit of the project. I continue to remain grateful for the opportunity to attempt to create this very public works of art.

ABOUT CHARLES RAY

Charles Ray (b. 1953, Chicago, Illinois) currently and works in Los Angeles, California. He has exhibited internationally with solo museum exhibitions in Basel, Chicago, London, Los Angeles, Milan, Berne, Vienna, Oslo, among other cities. His work has been featured in Documenta IX (1992), the Venice Biennale (1993, 2003, 2013) and five Whitney Biennials (1989, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2010).

