



# MICHAEL DE FEO

## CROSTOWN TRAFFIC

9 JUNE – 28 AUGUST 2016

*Crosstown Traffic*, a new installation by Michael De Feo, is the seventh exhibition in Rice Gallery's Summer Window series, which features works visible through the glass wall while the gallery is closed for the summer. De Feo, who was profiled this spring in *The New York Times*, is a painter with a penchant for street art, gaining international recognition for painting over outdoor fashion ads with buoyant floral patterns. In *Crosstown Traffic*, De Feo treats Rice Gallery's front glass wall like a supersized commercial display kiosk, enlarging a selection of fashion ads from magazines, printing them at nearly billboard size, and hand painting over them. As if a piece of Times Square or a large-scale storefront was transported to the gallery,

the floor-to-ceiling imagery engulfs the viewer with ads for Balmain x H&M, La Perla, Coach, and Dior that De Feo abstracts and enlivens with pops of color and pattern.

Known as "The Flower Guy," De Feo has painted flowers on the streets of New York and in over 60 cities internationally. His iconic line drawing of a curving stem topped with daisy-like petals can be seen sprouting from the bases of telephone poles, tucked in between signs, and embellishing a myriad of surfaces. A project that started nearly 25 years ago and continues today began with a simple aim, says De Feo, "to spread some cheer and smiles in a city full of concrete, steel, and glass."

De Feo found a new way of inserting his work into the daily life of the city when in 2014, Public Ad Campaign, an international alliance of artists founded by Jordan Seiler that provides access to municipal infrastructure for public dialogues, gave him a key to open advertising kiosks at bus stop shelters throughout New York City. He removes the locked-away fashion ads, brings them back to his studio, and paints on them using bold strokes of bright color suggesting flowers. De Feo then returns the ads to different kiosks, completing what he calls a “quiet intervention” and an “unauthorized collaboration” with the company, model, photographer, and art director. The painted ads have been largely embraced by the fashion industry for their sensitivity, whimsical quality, and beauty, which has led De Feo to unforeseen opportunities: designing two covers for the April 2016 issue of the Neiman Marcus catalogue, *THE BOOK*, and designing his own line of scarves and wraps for Echo New York.

For *Crosstown Traffic*, De Feo selected specific magazine ads for their composition, color, styling, and alluring quality, or what De Feo describes as the “sex appeal that one would associate with luxury brand advertising.” Using acrylic paint, De Feo responded to each ad differently, painting over brand names and parts of each model’s figure or face, hiding them behind encroaching arrangements of contrasting and complimenting colors. Bright blue and green strokes of paint almost subsume pop star Rihanna, partially covering her Dior sunglasses and encircling her glittery red lips. De Feo plunges inside the seductive, fantasy world of high-end advertising, normally kept at a distance behind glass or beneath the sheen of a glossy magazine page, and adds a human touch. Says De Feo: “One of the compelling aspects of working on fashion advertisements is that although I’m subverting the ads, they frequently end up reading like they were designed that way.”

## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Michael De Feo grew up in Rye, New York, graduating from the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan in 1995 with a degree in graphic design. He began installing his art on the streets in the early 1990s and in 1993 started his now iconic flower project. A Master of Arts in Teaching from Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York led to a job teaching art at Westhill High School in Stamford, Connecticut for 15 years, until he left in 2013 to pursue his artistic career full-time. De Feo’s work has been shown at venues including The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT; MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA; Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, San Juan, PR; The New Museum of Contemporary Art, NY; and StolenSpace, London, UK. He created a series of paintings for a line of women’s accessories developed in partnership with Echo New York, which launched in March 2016. The products are available at Bloomingdale’s, Lord & Taylor, and echodesign.com. De Feo also created work for a promotional campaign for designer Christian Louboutin. Michael De Feo lives and works in New York. He is represented by Danziger Gallery in New York where he will have a solo exhibition opening July 13th, 2016.

## **SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP**

Rice Gallery exhibitions and programs receive major support from the Rice University Art Gallery Patrons. Additional support comes from Rice Gallery Members, the Robert J. Card, M.D. and Karol Kreymer Catalogue Endowment, and the Leslie and Brad Bucher Artist Residency Endowment. The Gallery receives partial operating support from the City of Houston; KUHF-FM and Saint Arnold Brewing Company provide in-kind contributions.

## **SUMMER WINDOW HOURS**

The Summer Window installation is visible through the gallery’s front window during regular building hours:

Monday - Friday: 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Saturday - Sunday: 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

GALLERY ADMISSION IS FREE.

## **LOCATION AND PARKING**

Rice Gallery is on the ground floor of Sewall Hall and is reached using Campus Entrance 1 located at the intersection of Main Street and Sunset Boulevard. Paid parking (credit card only) is available in the Founder’s Court Visitor Lot directly in front of Sewall Hall.

For other parking options visit: [rice.edu/parking](http://rice.edu/parking)

By METRORail: Hermann Park/Rice University Station.

## **WHEELCHAIR ACCESS**

Wheelchair access is on the south (left) side of the building.

*Crosstown Traffic* (in progress), 2016

Photo: Walley Films

**Rice Gallery**  
ricegallery.org 713.348.6069