

Lomex Thinks It Can Create a Sexy New Vegas Art Scene, and More Juicy Art World Gossip

Plus, a conversation with Marvin, the A.I.-generated art bro.



Image of the new HQ of Lomex Las Vegas.

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SHULAN BETS ON THE HOUSE

Vegas is a city that people hate to love or love to hate. But there are two people in the art world who simply love to love it: **Lomex** gallery founder **Alexander Shulan** and celebrity art advisor **Ralph DeLuca**. They like it so much, in fact, that they are going in on a joint venture to open a gallery there together.

"The idea is that artists will come, make exhibitions, and install them in this radical environment—totally unlike what's happening in New York right now," Shulan told me over the phone.

The space, called **Lomex Las Vegas**, is an old atomic ranch home in a historic neighborhood three miles from the strip, notably where much of **Martin Scorsese's** "Casino" was filmed. Shulan described the curatorial vision of the house as "a 1960s mash-up of Rat Pack glamour and a porn set." Programming begins next year, installing new shows

seasonally along with performances, concerts, and special events organized and curated by Shulan. Lomex's existing artist roster will not be part of Lomex Las Vegas. Instead, a new suite of artists will be brought in.

"For openings, people will fly out. It'll be wild—like early art-fair energy," Shulan added.



Lomex Las Vegas.

"Vegas isn't trying to be Aspen or New York. It's its own thing," said DeLuca, who has lived in Vegas for eight years and advises for tony Vegas clients like **MGM Resorts**, "It's a small, extremely networked city. There's been a lag in institutions and museums. But now everything's starting to happen."

It's true, Las Vegas isn't a huge dot on the traveling art world circus's map, but there is a substantial amount of creative inspiration that flows from that desert. From the desk where I write this column, I can reach for three books without straining that reflect on the meaning of Las Vegas. In **John Gregory Dunne's** *Vegas: A Memoir of a Dark Season* (1974), he describes Sin City as "a paradigm of anti-life" and "an idiot Disneyland of architectural parabolas." In *The Goldfinch* (2013) by **Donna Tartt**, she draws inspiration from the city's "hot mineral emptiness" and an "improbable skyline dwindled into a wilderness of parking lots and outlet malls." Most relevant to the Wet Paint audience: In **Dave Hickey's** infamous essay about the city, "A Home in the Neon," from his beloved collection of essays *Air Guitar* (1997), Las Vegas is a town with "a quick, feral glamour" that "floats on a sleek *frisson* of anxiety and promise."

To DeLuca and Shulan, Vegas's art proclivities represent the anti-New York, where velvet paintings, vernacular photography, and kitsch antiques reign supreme. The whole wild venture is meant to be fun, but Shulan sees it as a serious venture for growing his enterprise and client-base. Mounting artwork in a super-aestheticized space is a challenge, but also "a constant visual foil for the art, and instantly recognizable in images," he told me.

"The definition of art is looser [in Vegas]," DeLuca said. "Art is the craziest, silliest thing in the world where serious money exchanges hands. But everything got so serious, and so political, that all the fun disappeared."