

CHLOE SELLS

DRUGS BEFORE DINNER, DEATH BEFORE DISHONOUR

Presented by Show Gallery

Curated by Price Latimer

June 25 – September 9, 2022

1515 N. Gardner St.
Los Angeles, CA 90046



Show Gallery is pleased to present *Drugs Before Dinner, Death Before Dishonour*, an exhibition of hand-painted photographs by Chloe Sells, as well as the official US book release of *Hot Damn!* (Sells' third monograph with GOST books) that accompanies the exhibition. Curated by Price Latimer, this is the first exhibition of Sells' work in Los Angeles.

Chloe Sells worked as a personal assistant for American writer and journalist Hunter S. Thompson from 2003 until his death in 2005. She is the only person he ever allowed to intimately photograph his notorious den of literary brilliance and vice, Owl Farm, in Woody Creek, CO. Her recent body of work and new book, *Hot Damn!* combines Sells' photographs of Hunter's home—documenting the interior, his possessions and handwritten notes—with landscapes of Aspen, Colorado, and her recollections of her time spent working with him.

S H O W G A L L E R Y

Many of Sells' hand-printed photographs have been overlaid with traditional marbling techniques, to create a psychedelic ride through the terrain of one of the most brilliant writers of our time.

"Officially, I was a personal assistant. Unofficially, I did anything and everything that needed doing. One night, Hunter beckoned me to his chair in the kitchen and said, 'So, you say you're a photographer. Well, Taschen is doing a book of my photographs,' followed by a mocking 'Ha, Ha.' I didn't mind; Hunter was Hunter. A moment later his face changed, and, looking sheepish and sorry for bullying his young assistant, he began to explain that almost his whole life had been documented—except for his home—the ramshackle, remarkable creative heartland that was Owl Farm. It needed to be visually archived, he said to me, and it was mine to photograph if I liked."

Hunter S. Thompson, a counter-culture icon, was an American journalist and writer, best known for his book *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971) and for creating "Gonzo Journalism." Alongside his distinctive and original voice, he was also known for his love of firearms, contempt for authority and lifelong use of alcohol and illegal narcotics. It is fitting that Sells' hallucinatory alterations of her photographs lift a straightforward visual documentary project into something more representative of Thompson and his vision.

Sells still uses film, and photographs with Contax 645 and Linhof 4x5 cameras. She prints all of her work by hand in the darkroom. Crooked edges are a result of cutting 50-meter rolls of paper in the dark, a reminder that the view of the world through our eyes is not rectangular. Her previous work melded darkroom alchemy and handmade manipulations of her former home in Botswana. This new series incorporates swirling abstract patterns directly onto the prints—using a form of Suminagashi, or floating ink, a Japanese paper marbling technique. The one-of-a-kind, kaleidoscopic visual results echo the unpredictable life, mind and habitat of Hunter S. Thompson.

"My main luxury in those years - a necessary luxury, in fact - was the ability to work in and out of my home-base fortress in Woody Creek. It was a very important psychic anchor to me, a crucial grounding point where I always knew I had love, friends, & good neighbors. It was like my personal Lighthouse that I could see from anywhere in the world - no matter where I was, or how weird & crazy I got, everything would be okay if I could just make it home. When I made that hairpin turn up the hill onto Woody Creek Road, I knew I was safe."

- Hunter S. Thompson, Woody Creek, Colorado, August 20, 2000, from the Author's note to *Fear and Loathing in America*

Chloe Sells was born in Aspen, Colorado in 1976 and began photographing in 1993. She attended the Rhode Island School of Design and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in photography, then completed her Masters in Fine Art at Central St. Martins London. Her work has been exhibited in multiple solo and group exhibitions internationally. Chloe lived for 21 years between London, UK and Maun, Botswana; she currently resides in Ubud, Bali. She has published three acclaimed books, *SWAMP* (2016), *Flamingo* (2017) and *Hot Damn!* (2022) with GOST Books. In 2016, her first publication, *SWAMP*, was shortlisted for the Prix du Livre d'Auteur des Rencontres de la Photographie d'Arles.

The exhibition will be open June 25 – September 9, 2022, [by appointment](#).

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