

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**Yasumasa Morimura***Requiem for the XX Century; Twilight of the Turbulent Gods*

November 24- December 23, 2007

Opening: Thursday, November 29, 6- 8pm



Luhring Augustine is pleased to present new self-portraits by the Japanese artist Yasumasa Morimura. This body of work entitled, *Requiem for the XX Century: Twilight of the Turbulent Gods*, examines an array of historical figures and political events that have been significant in shaping the 20th century. Employing his usual methodology, Morimura uses costumes, make-up and props to create unconventional and bold renderings of iconic images from history.

While Morimura's work has traditionally investigated femininity through iconic depictions of women from art history and popular culture, this body of work examines widely disseminated images of prominent masculine figures from the last century. Each protagonist or event is cast in a moment of apogee, when history is being made and visually captured. Substituting himself for ideologues, dictators or brilliant minds such as Einstein, Lenin, Che, Mao or Trotsky, Morimura reflects on his personal encounter of these images during his lifetime as well notions of masculinity embedded in politics and war. By re-contextualizing portraits and events into present day, Morimura offers a fresh look at these prominent men who, moved by wisdom, hate, ideology or idealism have carved a space in our collective psyche.

In the first work of the series, a video, *A Requiem: Mishima, 2007*, Morimura reenacts Yukio Mishima's nationalistic speech from 1970 which was given to a group of young soldiers with the intention to inspire a coup d'état. The writer follows his speech by performing a traditional *Seppuku* suicide. Morimura's speech is inspired by the original but is addressed instead to young Japanese artists. He implores them to "rise up" and "listen" as they are in danger of becoming "eternal slaves of foreign culture" and "spiritually bankrupt". Born in post WWII Japan, Morimura struggled with the dominant influence of the West in Japanese culture, a theme explored throughout his oeuvre. In *A Requiem: Laugh at the Dictator*, Morimura depicts Charlie Chaplin's comical portrayal of Hitler in the film from the 1940s 'The Great Dictator'. By employing a caricaturization, Morimura denies any glorification of Hitler, revealing a subjective presentation of history. His ability to satirize and simultaneously create an homage enables his work to defy categorization.

The word 'requiem' is explained by Morimura as "the relationship between us and our past". His subversive reinterpretation of both history and art history considers iconic events and figures through a blurred historical, cultural and geographical lens, offering a kind of reconciliation in the rift between the East and the West. Recounting a recent past full of leftist idealism and fascism, *Requiem for the XX Century: Twilight of the Turbulent Gods* compels the viewer to reexamine the inheritance of a collective history in the context of today's uncertain political climate.

Requiem for the XX Century: Twilight of the Turbulent was recently on view at the Belivaqua Foundation in Venice, Italy. Morimura has shown extensively in international solo exhibitions, and his work is in the following selected collections: The Rose Art Museum, Boston, The LA County Museum, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, The Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth, The Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

For further information, please contact Vanessa Critchell at 212-206-9100 or look on our website www.luhringaugustine.com.