

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

# NEW YORK

### **First Looks: Artist Richard Phillips Talks Adriana Lima and Lindsay Lohan**

BY CHARLOTTE COWLES



In January, artist Richard Phillips — known for his lush, hyper-realistic oil paintings of figures in pop culture like Taylor Swift, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Kristen Stewart — photographed Adriana Lima for *Visionaire* magazine's *3D Rio* project. Last year, he created a short film with Lindsay Lohan, titled *First Point*, that was displayed at Art Basel in June. Now he has incorporated these works into a new series of paintings, on view starting tonight at the Gagosian Gallery in New York. We caught up with him over the weekend about the show.

**You always paint from pictures, so working with live models is new for you — now that you've worked with Adriana and Lindsay, how do you feel about working from life versus working from a photo or an illustration?**

Working with Adriana, I was a bit nervous. She's so powerful — really an entity, in a way. It gave me more admiration for photographers that do that sort of thing professionally. There really is a sense of direction and confidence that inspires the model. There were some humorous moments where I had to go over the poses I wanted her to do by getting into those poses myself, which my assistants got a good laugh at. But it was only after I went

through a few of the pose sequences that I felt comfortable and was able to really talk about how to do that.

### **So what was it like to work with Adriana?**

These photographs were not easy to do, and required her skill to strike and hold complicated poses for quite a long time. You meet her and there's a generosity of spirit and very friendly and easy manner, and then all of sudden, the lights go on, and you realize you're working with this absolutely extraordinary person who's capable of creating these powerful images. It was my first time ever working with a fashion model. I shot her back in January, and days later, she appeared in no less than four Super Bowl commercials. I was sitting with friends and I mentioned I had just worked with her, and they were like "What?!" She really is flawless. We did a lot of postproduction work on the background of the photographs, but really none on her.

### **Was she pregnant when she posed?**

I don't believe so. Well, she may have been very early on and not known. I think only gave later, a week or so later, an announcement. That was really wonderful to hear. She certainly wasn't showing any signs around the time of the shoot, as the paintings will bear out.

### **Tell me about the paintings.**

It was understood from the beginning that the shoot would function as a way to capture images that I would then be using to create paintings. The paintings are meant to be physically overwhelming. They're upwards of eleven feet tall, and in some cases past twelve feet in width. They're meant to do what oil painting is meant to do, which is to do exactly what photography really can't — which is to re-actualize lived experience in a poetic sphere. My goal was to turn up the volume on the visual imagery of Adriana as far as it could go.

### **Do you ever get apprehensive about showing your subjects the paintings you've done of them?**

I haven't really done that many paintings where that opportunity comes up. I have to admit that, you know, you always have a sense of excitement about getting their reaction. But I'm really proud of how these turned out. They are very vivid, and they're also quite out-scaled. It would be like seeing yourself very big. But it's different from photography because it's not that click away from reality — it's something entirely constructed, by me, by hand.

### **It's not like you had a shared moment, as one does in photography.**

No, it's hours and hours and hours alone in my studio creating the image and painting it

away from the model. It's that second phase of image construction — at least the way that I do it with my artwork — and that is very solitary construction.



*Richard Phillips's works will be on view at the Gagosian Gallery at 555 West 24th Street from September 11 to October 20, 2012.*