

## Desert Inn (2016)

After watching *The Aviator* (2004) directed by Martin Scorsese, I began a fascination with the legendary and eccentric Howard Hughes. Howard Hughes was initially a guest of The Desert Inn hotel in Las Vegas where he rented out the top two floors for his stay when he arrived on Thanksgiving Day of 1966. When his ten-day reservation was up, he continued to occupy the floors. When the hotel's management asked him to leave, he negotiated to purchase the hotel. By March of 1967, Howard Hughes was the new owner of The Desert Inn. The reclusive Hughes continued to live in his penthouse suite at the hotel for four years, never leaving his large master bedroom. There, usually unclothed, he spent his time negotiating business deals and purchases with the curtains drawn and windows and doors sealed shut with tape. He did not allow anyone from the hotel staff to come in and clean his room. His mental and physical state began to rapidly deteriorate through his isolation and opiate addiction to medications he received after surviving a plane crash in 1946. His diet consisted of chocolate bars, chicken, and drank only milk, while surrounded by dozens of Kleenex boxes that he continuously stacked and re-arranged.

Inspired by Cindy Sherman's recent works, I've inserted myself into the photograph and history referencing a specific time and place using a true to the era 35-mm camera posing as Howard Hughes depicted in his final years at The Desert Inn hotel. Contempt and isolated while looking down at the table in front, we can only imagine his state of mind during his period of deterioration. Interested by the nostalgia of this place and time, the table was curated with original objects that were present at The Desert Inn in the late 1960's including: a Danish side table, Desert Inn branded playing cards, ashtray, matchbox, room key, beverage coaster, and playbill. The shape of the cactus on the table draws reference to the cactus depicted in the center of The Desert Inn logo under Howard Hughes's ownership. Also included on the table are: two *Esquire* magazines, one with Hughes on the cover, a pack of late 1960's Newport Cigarettes, a 1960's S.T. Dupont lighter, an original late 1960's MasterCard credit card imprinted with Howard Hughes name, a 20 dollar bill from 1963, and an original Howard Hughes business card. The bottles of milk and tissues scattered on the carpet allude to his personal tendencies resulting from his mental deterioration in the late 1960s.

This body of work is represented through two photographs while the table exists as a stand alone sculpture.

### Desert Inn I, 2016

C-print mounted on Dibond

16 x 20in

40.6 x 50.8cm

Edition of 5 plus 2AP

### Desert Inn II, 2016

C-print mounted on Dibond

16x20in

40.6 x 50.8cm

Edition of 5 plus 2AP