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IN THE FRAME

Michel Houellebecq's French Bashing show marks US debut

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Michel Houellebecq, France #014 (2016), courtesy the artist and VENUS, New York

Michel Houellebecq—the controversial, award-winning French author of novels including *Atomised* and *Platform*—is showing his photographs, photomontages and installations at Venus gallery in New York next month (2 June-4 August), marking his exhibition debut in the US. The title of the show—*French Bashing*—may raise eyebrows. The novelist's works highlight the bleaker aspects of French culture and architecture, depicting for instance the stark, suburban "peri-urban" zones outside cities. Garish images show another side to French tourism, advertising destinations such as St. Tropez. Houellebecq showed some of the works last year at Paris's Palais de Tokyo in the *Rester Vivant* exhibition, including the prescient print, *France #014* (1994/2016), which presents the word "Europe" carved in crumbling concrete. "For *French Bashing* at Venus, Houellebecq has re-conceptualised and tailored two portions of *Rester Vivant*, completely transforming the gallery's New York space with darkened walls, engineered lighting, and immersive soundscapes composed in collaboration with Raphaël Sohier," a press statement says. Houellebecq's novel *Submission*, published in 2015, envisages France ruled by a Muslim president in 2022.