

# VENUS

MANHATTAN LOS ANGELES

THE LOCAL 

## France's bad boy of literature takes 'French Bashing' to New York



Photo: AFP

**France's bad boy of literature, Michel Houellebecq, is about to open his first exhibition in the US, a multimedia work titled French Bashing that takes a mournful look at the country's "peri-urban" wastelands whose inhabitants vote largely for far-Right leader Marine Le Pen.**

The author, one of France's most provocative cultural figures and the country's best-known writers abroad, has reworked a show held last year in Paris and will open it on June 2 in the Venus gallery in New York.

The exhibition of photographs, photomontages and immersive soundscapes shows aspects of France that few tourists get to see.

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It will focus for example on “peri-urban” zones - bleak places on the edges of cities that are somewhere between suburban and rural - where unemployment is high and poverty rife and where the far-Right’s populist lure strikes a chord.

Houellebecq has been taking photos for decades but only a few years ago started exhibiting his images.

The writer’s three-decade long literary career has produced a raft of novels such as *Whatever*, *Atomised* and *The Map and the Territory*, that look at sex tourism, Islam, and contemporary art.

His most recent novel *Submission* imagines a Muslim candidate becoming president of France in 2022 after beating off his rival Marine Le Pen.

The book was published, probably coincidentally, on the same day in January 2015 that jihadists launched a deadly assault on the Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine’s offices in Paris.

The cover of that week’s edition carried a grotesque caricature of Houellebecq, wearing a wizard’s hat, under the headline: “The Predictions of Wizard Houellebecq.”