

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

BRUSSELS

Andres Serrano

Cuba

13 March – 17 April 2014

Rue Charles Decoster 8 - Brussels 1050



Andres Serrano, Alicia Alonso, Prima Ballerina and Choreographer 2012. Cliché, Aluabla, original artist frame 185.1 x 139.7 cm 85 x 55 1/2 inches

The Nathalie Obadia Gallery Brussels is delighted to present the exhibition *Cuba*, its second collaboration with Andres Serrano. In 2012, the American artist showed *Sacramentum: Sacred Shadows* in Brussels: images of the *Holy works* series that examined the symbols of Catholicism. Still topical in the *Cuba* exhibition, this question focuses greater emphasis on Human Beings, incarnated in the twenty or so photographs on show as of 13 March in Brussels. The people of the island turn out to be the main subject and object of a trip made by the artist in the summer of 2012. This Caribbean saga has bequeathed images and a collection with a foreword that begins with: "I wanted to capture the Breath of a Nation, its land, its people, its future."

Born in New York in 1950 to parents from Cuba and Honduras, Andres Serrano went to Cuba for the first time on 25 May 2012. He had accepted an invitation from Jorge Fernandez, Director of the Wilfredo Lam Institute, to be present at the Havana Biennale which the latter oversees. Andres Serrano seized the opportunity to spend some time on the island of his forebears, nurturing a secret hope to fathom its essence. To that end, he stayed in the centre of Havana, in the Hotel Nacional, haunted by memories of such prestigious guests as Nat King Cole, Ernest Hemingway, and cigar aficionado Winston Churchill among many others. He set up his photography studio not far from the hotel, in a guest house located at the very heart of a working class neighbourhood which he at first found agitated and worrisome, before he grew familiar with its inhabitants as they passed through his lens in turn.

The excessively bright local light during the day forced Andres Serrano to start shooting outdoors at dawn. He would then start roaming the narrow streets of the city lined by outmoded manorial homes and dilapidated shacks. His eye was drawn by the polychromy of the facades full of cracks and in general by the ravages of time that embrittle the buildings in the old quarters left derelict by the regime. The setting exudes a “poetry of ruins” bathed in nostalgia.

The photograph entitled *Cristina, Miramar, Havana*, another metaphor for the time that goes by, shows a young woman at a window whose theme, beloved of Matisse, borrows its narrative dimension from painting and reminds us that Andres Serrano describes himself as a “painter and portraitist first and foremost.”



Andres Serrano, *Cristina, Miramar, Havana*, 2012. Chromogenic print on aluminum, 105.1 x 130.7 cm (41.7 x 51.5 in.)



Andres Serrano, *Jorge, Las Ruinas de Reyes, Monreales, Camagüey*, 2012. Chromogenic print on aluminum, 105.1 x 130.7 cm (41.7 x 51.5 in.)

Andres Serrano met his models whilst walking through the city. When evening fell, he invited them to his studio when he was not invited to their homes. These sessions were dedicated to portraits. The Cuban woman is given particular pride of place. The faces are weathered by the harshness of daily life. Irrespective of their age, some accept to pose nude for the camera, always with modesty and dignity. Andres Serrano depicts as truthfully in his photographs the campesinos whom he calls “Cuban cowboys.” This series of portraits of men with hats takes us temporarily outside the capital. They all share an extreme psychological depth rendered by the intensity of the looks.

Back in Havana, with the series of “colonial houses.” These erstwhile luxurious houses belonged to the Cuban and Spanish aristocracy before the Castro revolution in 1959. Dating from the 19th century, they were nationalised and turned into community housing dwellings. Curiously enough, one house escaped this fate: that of *Jose Miguel Alonso* and *Josefina Grande* (2 photographs presented in Brussels). It has been frozen in time since Fidel Castro came to power, as attested to by a series of interior photographs. The elegance of the woodwork is betrayed by the gutted bases of the furniture. An advanced sign of the decrepitude of the premises. This situation is reflected throughout the city whose charm oscillates between splendour and decadence.

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Andres Serrano, Family Portrait, 2012, Cibachrome, Plexiglas, cadre de l'artiste, 114,3 x 96,52 cm (45 x 38 in), encadré ed 1/77

This is the delightful paradox that Andres Serrano has managed to pull off in *Cuba*.

This collection of images also features shots of contrasted atmospheres. Some are deliberately shocking, as in the case of body fragments photographed at the Havana faculty of medicine. In the same vein as *Piss Christ* (1987) which mixed human secretions, Andres Serrano extends the taste for the provocative albeit, as always, in an artful manner to raise awareness.

Born in New York in 1950, to parents from Honduras and Cuba, Andres Serrano grew up in Brooklyn where he studied at the Brooklyn Art School. In 1987, he was at the centre of a scandal that made him known throughout the world, following the exhibition of the immersion work "Piss Christ," a photograph of a crucifix immersed in a glass of urine. His works are present in many private and public collections, including the CAPC Bordeaux Museum of Contemporary art, the Queen Sophia Museum in Madrid, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and the Institutes of Contemporary Art in Chicago, Boston and Amsterdam.

In 2014, the Merz Foundation in Turin will devote a retrospective to Andres Serrano.

In 2015, the Fotografiska Museum of Stockholm, then in 2016, the European House of Photography in Paris respectively will organise solo exhibition devoted to the artist.

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SOLO SHOWS (SELECTION)

- 2014 :** Andres Serrano, Musée Fesh, Ajaccio, France
2013 : Andres Serrano, Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris, France
2012 : *Sacramentum: Sacred Shadows*, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Bruxelles, Belgium
2009 : *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Yvon Lambert, London, United Kingdom
2008 : *Shit*, Yvon Lambert, New York, NY, United States
Shit, Yvon Lambert, Paris, France
2007 : *A History of Sex*, Kulturen, Lund, Sweden
The Morgue Part II, Yvon Lambert, Paris, France
El Dit a La Nafra, Centre Cultural METROPOLITÀ, L'Hospitalet, Spain
2006 : *En Las Fronteras* Villa Croce Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Genes, Italy
Photographie Sehen ... Nusser & Baumgart Contemporary, Munich, Germany
Beautiful Suffering – Photography and the Traffic in Pain, Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, United States
Dark Places, Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, United States
Andres Serrano - La Part Maudite, Collection Lambert en Avignon, Avignon, France
2005 : *Andres Serrano – Retrospective*, Moscow House of Photography, Moscow, Russia
Andres Serrano – America, Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid, Spain

GROUP SHOWS (SELECTION)

- 2013 :** *Flesh*, The Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, Ireland
Tell It To My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault, Kunstmuseum, Basel, Switzerland
Superreal: alternative realities in photography and new media, Museo del Barrio, New York, United States
NYC 1993, The New Museum, New York, United States
Skin: an artistic atlas, Royal Hibernian Gallery, Dublin, Ireland
C'est la vie, Das ganze Leben - Der Mensch in Malerei und Fotografie, Deutsches Hygiene Museum, Dresden, Germany
Through A Glass Darkly, Faces Past And Present, Ernst Museum Budapest, Budapest, Hungary
L'oeil photographique, Œuvres majeures de la collection du Centre national des arts plastique, FRAC Auvergne, Clermont- Ferrand, France.
- 2012 :** *Wonderful – Humboldt, Krokodil & Polke*, Die Olbricht Collection - me Collectors Room Berlin, Berlin, Germany
Religion & Riten, Art Foyer der DZ Bank Kunstsammlung, Frankfurt/Main, Germany
Les chefs d'oeuvre de la donation Yvon Lambert, Collection Lambert, Avignon, France
Überall und nirgends, Werke aus der Sammlung Reydan Weiss, Kunsthau Villa Jauss, Oberstdorf, Germany
11th Havana Biennial, La Bienal de La Habana, Havana, Cuba
Struggle(s), Maison Particulière Art Center, Brussels, Belgium.
Beyond Memory, Museum on the Seam, Jerusalem, Israel
Der Mensch und seine Objekte, Museum Folkwang Essen, Essen, Germany

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Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Brussels

Andres Serrano
Cuba
13 March - 17 April
Opening 13 March

Valérie Belin
22 April - 21 June
Opening 22 April

Sophie Kuikjen
26 June - 2 August
Opening 26 June

Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Paris
Cloître Saint-Merri

Agnès Varda
8 February - 5 April 2014

Manuel Ocampo
12 April - 31 May 2014
Opening 12 April
Laure Prouvost
September-October 2014

Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Paris
Bourg-Tibourg

Fabrice Hyber
Interdit aux enfants
14 Mars-13 Mai 2014
Opening 14 March

Xu Zhen by MadIn Company
24 Mai - 25 Juillet 2014
Opening 24 May

Mickalene Thomas
11 September - Octobre 2014
Opening 11 September