

Galerie Nathalie Obadia

bruxelles

Andres Serrano

Sacramentum: Sacred Shadows

1 March – 5 May 2012



Pieta, 2011, cibachrome, silicone, plexiglass and wood frame,
101,6 x 82,5 cm – 40 x 32,5 in.

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is delighted to be presenting the exhibition ***Sacramentum: Sacred Shadows***, its first collaboration with American artist Andres Serrano.

For this event, the artist has chosen to show a selection of pieces drawn from the emblematic bodies of his work, so as to set his latest photographic production *Holy Works* – dating from 2011 – in a retrospective ensemble.

Andres Serrano is recognised as one of the artists who have been most bold in dealing with religion and the sacred in contemporary art, but through *Sacramentum: Sacred Shadows* he shows that his artistic approach is far more than simply provocation.

The point is that in his new series *Holy Works*, Andres Serrano revisits the sacred painting of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance with the idea of “*reinventing and reinforcing the sacred icons*”, the exact opposite of the blasphemous logic for which his work is sometimes criticised.

“*I am a Christian and an artist, and as a Christian, I am entitled to use the symbols of the Church, because they are the symbols of my faith ... This is not about attacking God or the Church, but actually about celebrating them both. Not only do I believe in God, I also believe in religious art, and in the beauty and power of that art*”, explains the artist, who has a fascination with baroque and gothic Catholic imagery.

“*Serrano’s entire endeavour rests upon the synthesis of opposites, so that the lower part is in dialogue with the upper part, the human with the divine, the earthbound with the celestial*”, writes Italian art critic Germano Celant about *Holy Works*. “*He seeks to reconcile the life of the flesh with the life of the spirit, sex and chastity, the sacred and the profane*”.

The earlier series, *The Morgue* (1992), *America* (2002), *Klansman* and *Nomads* (1990), *Budapest* (1994), *The Interpretation of Dreams* (2000-01), and the highly controversial *Bodily Fluids* (1985-1990), follow a thread in his output where there is an obvious recurrence of themes, mingling political and aesthetic concerns: Christianity and the weightiness of its symbols, patriotism, social problems and prejudices, racism, sex and death are among this artist’s obsessions in his determination to transcend the notion of the forbidden in our contemporary society.

By drawing from this reservoir of basic subjects, and through this affection for the strange, the unusual, those rejected and marginalised by society, Serrano succeeds in transforming photography into a strong act to assert his ideas. While acknowledging the influence of Raphael, Rembrandt and Bosch, he roots his work in the tradition of the conceptual artists.

The truthfulness with which the artist captures the character of his models and his ability to reveal the beauty in an often morbid reality give his works an unparalleled emotional power, sowing the seeds of a genuine empathy with the viewer.

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Biography

Born in New York in 1950, of mixed Honduran/Cuban parentage, Andres Serrano grew up in Brooklyn, where he studied at the Brooklyn Art School. Photography then became his favoured medium: "I am an artist first, and a photographer second", he stated, but the artist also voluntarily defined himself as a painter and portraitist. In 1987, he was at the heart of a scandal which earned him a global reputation, following the exhibition of Immersions, 'Piss Christ', a photograph of a crucifix submerged in a glass of urine. His works are held by many private and public collections, including the CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain in Bordeaux, the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and the Institutes of Contemporary Art in Chicago, Boston and Amsterdam.

Solo exhibitions (selection)

- 2009** *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Yvon Lambert London, England
2008 *Shit*, Yvon Lambert Paris, France
2006 *En Las Fronteras*, Villa Croce Museo d'Arte Contemporaneo, Genes, Italy
Dark Places, Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica CA, USA
2005 Andres Serrano – Retrospective, Moscow House of Photography, Moscow, Russia
2000 *Body and Soul*, Barbican Art Center, London, England

Collective exhibitions (selection)

- 2007** *Busy Going Crazy*, La Maison Rouge, Paris, France
Redefined, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC, USA
2006 *La Vision Impura – Fondo de La Coleccion Permanente*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain
2005 *Oog in Oog*, Groninger Museum, Groningen, The Netherlands
2003 *Pulp Art*, Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, USA
2001 *Give & Take*, Serpentine Gallery, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England

Galerie Nathalie Obadia - Paris

Pascal Pinaud
Sept ans de réflexion
Until 25 February

MadeIn Company (Galerie I)
Sleeping Life Away

Barry X Ball (Galerie II)
Matthew Barney / Barry X Ball Dual-Dual Portrait
17 March – 16 May 2012

Guillaume Bresson (Galerie I)
Thomas Leroy (Galerie II)
24 May – 21 July 2012

Galerie Nathalie Obadia - Bruxelles

Group Show
Hors les Murs
Until 25 February 2012

Andres Serrano
Sacramentum : Sacred Shadows
1 March – 5 May 2012

Franck Nitsche
10 May – 14 July 2012

Fairs

The Armory Show
8 – 11 March 2012

Art Dubai
21 – 24 March 2012

Art Brussels
19 – 22 April 2012

Art HK 12
17 – 20 May 2012

Art143IBasel
14 – 17 June 2012

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