

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

ANDRES SERRANO

THE DOOM OF BEAUTY

September 2 - November 11, 2023

3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri, Paris 4^e



Michelangelo Brutus II, 2023
Acrylic, oil pastels and mixed media on vinyl
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is delighted to present *THE DOOM OF BEAUTY*, Andres Serrano's first-ever exhibition of paintings. Borrowing its title from a poem by Michelangelo, it is the artist's sixth solo show at the gallery.

Born in 1950 in New York, Andres Serrano has been developing, over the past thirty years, a body of work that relates to the *Spirit of the Times* – translated from the German *Zeitgeist*, a philosophical term referring to the intellectual, moral and cultural context of a certain era. His work as an artist demands that we look – that we look straight in the eyes¹ – at the spirit of our times: its abuses, its disruptions and its violence, concealed in our contemporary societies. While, at first glance, Andres Serrano's work bewilders the viewer with its power of representation, it must also be seen through the prism of the artist's fascination with certain old masters. References to the history of art, both in terms of painting and sculpture, run through his entire oeuvre. By "updating" certain classical artworks, Andres Serrano brings them back to life: the framing is original, the colorimetry resolutely personal, and each composition is meticulously reworked by the contemporary artist. In his own words, the point is to prove that "what happens in the past does not always stay in the past."

While religious iconography is a leitmotif in his work, the *THE DOOM OF BEAUTY* exhibition presents a group of works that are completely new to Andres Serrano's artistic repertoire. Large-scale, black and white photographic prints of sculptures by Michelangelo (1475-1564) – along with other Greek and Roman sculptures – have been reworked with color. For this new series, the artist replaces the camera – his preferred medium – with pastels, pencils and acrylic paint. For the first time since studying painting at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, Andres Serrano has returned to the practice of painting. It was last year, while leafing through a catalogue on the Italian Renaissance sculptor, that he began drawing on the book's photographs with no particular intention. "The drawings," he says, "were very spontaneous, almost unconscious. It was a way of liberating myself from a self-imposed exile whereby I made art not with my own hands but with a camera."

In this way, the colorful strokes follow the agile outlines of each sculpture, sometimes drifting away from them, in some cases following the natural path of paint as it drips downwards, under the effect of gravity. These combinations of lines and colors create a play on rhythm, matter and contrasts. Here, the act of painting introduces light into the image and frees it from its simple historical or religious function.

¹ ARASSE Daniel, *Les Transis*, 1992

Andres Serrano is particularly fond of Michelangelo's Pietá. This sculpture, which physically stands at the entrance to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, embodies the miracle of supreme skill: the marble is pure, polished and gleaming; the drapery is divine. In these beautiful things, there is also the appearance of the dead Christ, his whole body stretched out on the Virgin Mary's lap. The beauty of the body emerges from the stone, an artificial nude that seems so real to us. Three interpretations of the sculpture, titled *Emerald Pieta*, *Orange Pieta* and *Cadmium Red Pieta* unfold before our eyes, distinguished from each other by their color. Here, Christ adheres simultaneously to the realms of sculpture, photography and painting, offering spectators *the art of metamorphosis*: while stone is transformed into an imitation of reality, photography simulates the weight of the sculpted cloth. Painting, meanwhile, embodies the divine breath, giving life to the subjects in the image, the color red trickling like blood.

Thus, while celebrating a new aspect of Andres Serrano's artistic activity, these works inscribe themselves in the continuity of his artistic practice: each stone statue comes to life under its colored outlines, similarly to the art of portraiture, which has been dear to the artist for a long time. In the gallery space, the portraits surge from the past and are hung at visitors' eyelevel: a co-presence that invites reflection on the place of the sacred – from religious worship to the sacralization of an artwork – in our contemporary societies. More than a mirror of today's world, *THE DOOM OF BEAUTY* exhibition both questions and disturbs, that is, ultimately, the purpose of art. Andres Serrano states "My works does not reflect today's world, it reflects my world and for an artist, that's all that matters."

Andres Serrano was born in New York (USA) in 1950. He lives and works in New York.

Graduated from the Brooklyn Museum Art School of New York (USA) in 1969, Andres Serrano is one of the most recognized contemporary artist on the international art scene.

He enjoyed several major solo shows such as *Andres Serrano – Retrospective* at the Moscow House of Photography (Russia, 2005), *Dark Places* at the Santa Monica Museum of Art (USA, 2006), *Beautiful Suffering – Photography and the Traffic in Pain* at the Williams College Museum of Art (USA, 2006), *En Las Fronteras* at the Villa Croce Museo d'Arte Contemporanea in Genoa (Italy, 2006), *A History of Sex* at the Kulturen of Lund (Sweden, 2007), *Andres Serrano* at the Palais Fesch - Musée des Beaux-Arts in Ajaccio (Corsica, 2014), *Ainsi soit-il* at the Château de Villeneuve, Fondation Emile Hugues in Vence (France, 2015), *Redemption* at the Fotografiska Museum of Stockholm (Sweden, 2015), *Andres Serrano* at the Void Derry of Londonderry (Ireland, 2016), *Torture* at the Collection Lambert, Avignon (France, 2016), *Ainsi soit-il* at the Collection Lambert en Avignon (France, 2016), *Uncensored photographs* at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels (2016), *Andres Serrano* at La Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris (France, 2016), *Andres Serrano* at the Petit Palais in Paris (France, 2017), *Andres Serrano - Revealing Reality* at Huis Marseille in Amsterdam (The Netherlands, 2017), *Torture* at the Stills Gallery in Edinburgh (United Kingdom, 2018), *The Game - All Things Trump* at ArtX in New-York (USA, 2019) and *Andres Serrano: An American Perspective* at the Red Brick Art Museum in Beijing (China, 2019), *Infamous* at Fotografiska in New York and at NeueHouse in Los Angeles (USA, 2020), *'Torture' by Andres Serrano - An A/political Project* at the Municipal Theatre of Pireaus in Athens (Greece, 2021), *Infamous* at Fotografiska in Stockholm (Sweden, 2022) and *Andres Serrano : Infamous Beauty* at DOX Centre for Contemporary Art in Prague (Czech Republic, 2023). A solo exhibition *Infamous* will take place at the Fotografiska in Berlin in 2024 (Germany).

He also took part in several significant group shows among which *Street & Studio: An Urban History of Photography* at the Tate Modern of London (United Kingdom, 2008), *Traces du Sacré* at the Pompidou Center of Paris (France, 2008), *Autour de l'extrême* at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris (France, 2010), *Unsettled: Photography and Politics in Contemporary Art* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (USA, 2011), *NYC 1993* at the New Museum of New York (USA, 2013), *Le Mur* at La Maison Rouge in Paris (France, 2014), *Slip of the tongue*, at the Punta della Dogana, Pinault Foundation in Venice (Italy, 2016), *Perfect Likeness : Photography and composition* at the Hammer Museum of Los Angeles (USA, 2016), *Joie de vivre* at the Palais des Beaux Arts of Lille (France, 2016), *Nothing but blue skies* at the Rencontres de la photographie in Arles, (France, 2016), *Love Stories* during the PHOTAUMNALES 2016 in Beauvais (France, 2016), *An incomplete history of protest* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New-York (USA, 2018), *Show your wound* at the Dom Museum in Vienna (Austria, 2018) and *Incarnations - African Art as Philosophy* at the Centre for Fine Arts - BOZAR in Brussels (Belgium, 2019), *Les Choses: une histoire de la nature morte* at the Musée du Louvre in Paris (France, 2022). A group exhibition entitled *Zurbarán. Une icône du Siècle d'Or* will take place in 2024 at the Musée des Beaux Arts in Lyon (France).

Andres Serrano's work is present in many private and public collections such as the MOMA in New York (USA), Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris (France), Huis Marseille in Amsterdam (Holland), National Gallery of Australia in Canberra (Australia), the Vancouver Art Gallery (Canada), the Museum of Contemporary Art of Zagreb (Croatia), the ARKEN Museum for Moderne Kunst in Copenhagen (Denmark), the CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (France), the Collection Lambert en Avignon (France), the Institute of Contemporary Art in Amsterdam (The Netherlands), the Israel Museum of Jerusalem (Israel), the Centro Cultural Arte Contemporaneo of Mexico City (Mexico), the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, (USA), the Brooklyn Museum (USA), the Institute of Contemporary Art of Boston (USA), the Modern Art Museum Fort Worth (USA), the New Museum of Contemporary Art of New York (USA), the Groninger Museum (The Netherlands), the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington (USA).

Paris Saint-Honoré

Enfances

September 13 - October 21, 2023

Luc Delahaye

November 6 - December, 2023

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri

Andres Serrano

THE DOOM OF BEAUTY
September 2 - November 11, 2023

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri II

Joris Van de Moortel

'Why do you tear me from myself?'
a tête-à-tête with Marsyas
September 2 - October 21, 2023

Bruxelles

Hoda Kashiha

Another world is waiting for us
September 7 - October 21, 2023

Jorge Queiroz

October 26 - December 16, 2023

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