

**GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA**

PARIS - BRUXELLES

## Andres Serrano

*A Personal Mythology*

*Immersion and Bodily Fluids (1986–1990)*

November 10, 2025 — January 24, 2026

3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri, Paris 4<sup>e</sup>

*Ecce Homo (Immersion)*, 1988  
Pigment Print, 165,1 x 114,3 cm / 65 x 45 in. (framed)



Galerie Nathalie Obadia is pleased to present *A Personal Mythology: Immersion and Bodily Fluids (1986-1990)*, an exhibition bringing together fifteen works from two iconic series by American artist Andres Serrano. While the Musée Maillol devoted a major retrospective to him last year—conceived in the context of a decisive American presidential campaign—this new exhibition refocuses on the origins of his artistic practice. These early works testify to the deep commitment of an artist who, from the outset, has questioned the cultural, religious and social foundations of contemporary America. Since the 1980s, they have established Andres Serrano as a major and controversial figure in contemporary art.

Born in 1950 in New York, the artist grew up in a Catholic family. Trained as a painter, he turned away from it in the 1970s to explore photography, a medium that he approached with a visual rigor inherited from the Old Masters. From the outset, his oeuvre has been informed by two influences: on the one hand religious iconography and Western pictorial tradition—especially Baroque—, and on the other, a critical dialogue with the Modern avant-garde. His very first series, *Early Works* (1983-1987), already illustrates this crossover: the traditional vanitas are replaced by a glass jar containing a freshly butchered calf's brain, the first signs of a clear oscillation between the sacred and the profane.

In 1986, Andres Serrano's work reached a turning point: William "Bill" R. Olander, then chief curator of the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, invited him to participate in the exhibition *FAKE*, exploring 'fake' in postmodern culture. This exchange gave rise to *Milk, Blood* (1986), a photograph whose surface, divided into sections in the style of Piet Mondrian, contrasts milk (white) with blood (red). This work embodies the birth of a dialogue between modernist abstraction and organic materiality: with the *Bodily Fluids* series (1986-1990), the artist went on to make vast monochromes, rigorously framed using milk, urine and blood, to which he soon added semen, sometimes captured in a jet, sometimes frozen. These works are imbued with a strong organic dimension, radically breaking away from the aesthetic autonomy of abstraction. Here, the photographs seem unable to detach themselves from either the world or the artist, through whom meaning erupts into the world. This choice, filtered through the prism of Andres Serrano, is steeped in marked Christian symbolism: blood evokes the sacrifice of Christ, milk refers the nurturing Virgin Mary, while semen and urine recall the trivial flesh, perceived as impure.

With the *Immersion series* (1987-1990), Andres Serrano radicalized his approach: crucifixes and religious statuettes are immersed in the murky opacity of bodily fluids. Light, as it passes through matter, acts as a revelation, bringing out shapes and sculpting contours. It was, however, with *Piss Christ* (1987) that the artist truly established his signature style. Often perceived as blasphemous, this work is still, according to Andres Serrano, part of an approach that is as much experimental as it is spiritual: *"Piss Christ is the first Immersion, the first time that I immersed an object in a bodily fluid. It was urine, it was Christ... Naturally, I had to call it Piss Christ. I didn't consider whether it was blasphemous."*

The artist claims to be paying tribute to the humanity of Christ, reminding us that the crucifixion was an agonizing death, marked by the outpouring of all bodily fluids *"If this Christ shocks,"* he says, *"it is perhaps because we have forgotten what he really represents: not a decorative piece of jewelry, but the extreme suffering of a man."* Piss Christ thus becomes less the subject of scandal than the vehicle for questioning the place of religion in our contemporary culture. The image, according to Michel Draguet, curator of the Musée Maillol exhibition, stands out as *"triumphant and pacified in a symbolic state of fullness."*

Since these first series, Andres Serrano has paid particular attention to framing, chromatic intensity, and light modulations, literally transposing the body into the pictorial register. His experiments resonated with the climate of the 1980s, marked by the emergence of AIDS: as the illness stigmatized the homosexual communities and became a political issue, Andres Serrano's works took on a renewed intensity. Behind their apparent neutrality, they reveal an existential dimension, that of the body's fragility, of the need for collective resistance.

Some of the works on display are anchored in a powerful iconographic tradition, maintaining a close connection with history: fueled by his passion for collecting, Andres Serrano references and transposes the great motifs—from The Rape of the Sabine Women to The Winged Victory of Samothrace or, among others, The Pietà—to question their significance in our contemporary reality. This tension between heritage and current events structures his practice. As the artist states, *"What happened in the past does not always remain in the past."* Immersed in organic matter, these iconographies, reactivated nearly forty years later, resonate differently and say something new about our society. With this Personal Mythology, Andres Serrano offers an intimate body of work, that is at once universal and timeless.

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

Andres Serrano attended the Brooklyn Museum Art School in New York (USA) in 1969 and has since become one of the most acclaimed contemporary artists on the international art scene. In 2017, he was appointed a Chevalier in the French Order of Arts and Letters.

He has had significant solo exhibitions, including at the Petit Palais in Paris (France, 2017), the Musée Maillol in Paris (France, 2024), the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels (Belgium, 2016), the Collection Lambert in Avignon (France, 2016), the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris (France, 2016), Institute for Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (USA, 1994), The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (USA, 1994), Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (USA, 1994), Malmö Konsthall, Malmö (Sweden, 1994), Fotografiska in New York (USA, 2022), the Fotografiska Museum in Stockholm (Sweden, 2015), Fotografiska in Berlin (Germany, 2024), Dox Centre for Contemporary Art in Prague (Czech Republic, 2023), Groninger Museum, Groningen (The Netherlands, 1997), the Red Brick Art Museum in Beijing (China, 2019), the Kulturen Museum in Lund (Sweden, 2007), the Moscow House of Photography in Moscow (Russia, 2005), Center for Contemporary Art, Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw (Poland, 1994), Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana (Slovenia, 1994), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (Australia, 1997), Williams College Museum of Art in Williamstown (USA, 2006), the Villa Croce Museo d'Arte Contemporanea in Genoa (Italy, 2006), the Palais Fesch-Musée des Beaux-Arts in Ajaccio (Corsica, 2014), the Château de Villeneuve, Fondation Emile Hugues in Vence (France, 2015), the Void Derry in Londonderry (Ireland, 2016), Huis Marseille in Amsterdam (Netherlands, 2017), the Stills Gallery in Edinburgh (UK, 2018), ArtX in New York (USA, 2019), the National Gallery of Sofia (Bulgaria, 2022), Santa Monica Museum of Art in Santa Monica (USA, 2006).

He has also participated in numerous significant group exhibitions, including at the Tate Modern in London (UK, 2008), the Centre Pompidou in Paris (France, 2008), the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris (France, 2010), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (USA, 2011), the New Museum in New York (USA, 2013), La Maison Rouge in Paris (France, 2014), the Punta della Dogana – Fondation Pinault in Venice (Italy, 2016), the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles (USA, 2016), the Rencontres de la photographie in Arles (France, 2016), during the Photomaiales in Beauvais (France, 2016), the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (USA, 2018), the Dom Museum in Vienna (Austria, 2018), the Palais des Beaux-Arts – BOZAR in Brussels (Belgium, 2019), the Louvre Museum in Paris (France, 2022), the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach (USA), the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon (France, 2024), the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (Netherlands, 2025), the Limburgs Museum in Venlo (Netherlands, 2025), and is scheduled to exhibit at MOCA x The Brick in Los Angeles (USA), Künstlerhaus Vereinigung in Vienna (Austria), and the Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prato (Italy) between 2025 and 2026.

The works of Andres Serrano are held in numerous private and public collections, including those of the MOMA in New York (USA), FNAC; National Foundation for Contemporary Art, (France) Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, (The Netherlands), Smithsonian Archives, Washington D.C. (USA) National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C. (USA) the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (USA) Collection Lambert, Avignon, (France), Pinault Collection-Palazzo Grassi, Venice, (Italy), the CAPC Musée d'art contemporain in Bordeaux (France), New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, New York, (USA), Vatican Contemporary Art Collection, (Vatican), Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, (USA), the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris (France), the Groninger Museum (Netherlands), Huis Marseille (The Netherlands), the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra (Australia), the Vancouver Art Gallery (Canada), the Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb (Croatia), the ARKEN Museum for Moderne Kunst in Copenhagen (Denmark), the Institute of Contemporary Art in Amsterdam (Netherlands), the Israel Museum in Jerusalem (Israel), the Centro Cultural Arte Contemporaneo in Mexico City (Mexico), the Brooklyn Museum (USA), the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston (USA), the Modern Art Museum in Fort Worth (USA) and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington (USA).

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**Paris Saint-Honoré**

**Mickalene Thomas**  
*je t'adore deux*  
October 19 – January 3, 2026

**Paris Cloître Saint-Merri**

**Fiona Rae**  
*Ensemble*  
September 6 – October 25, 2025

**Brussels**

**Johanna Mirabel**  
*I Wish*  
September 4 – October 25, 2025

**Andres Serrano**  
*A Personal Mythology*  
*Immersion and Bodily Fluids (1986–1990)*  
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Paris Cloître Saint-Merri - Espace II

**Patrick Faigenbaum**  
November 10, 2025 – December 2025

**Sacha Cambier de Montraval**  
*j'ai assis la Beauté sur mes genoux. –*  
*Et je l'ai trouvée amère*  
November 6 – January 10, 2026

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