

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

ANDRES SERRANO

TORTURE

November 10th - December 30th, 2016

18, rue du Bourg-Tibourg - 75004 - Paris



Andres Serrano, *Fools Mask IV, Hever Castle, England (Torture)*, 2015

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is pleased to present the Torture series, which inaugurates Andres Serrano's first exhibition in our Parisian gallery after *Sacramentum: Sacred Shadows* (2012) and *Cuba* (2014) held in our gallery of Brussels.

At the same time, the Maison Européenne de la Photographie is dedicating a solo show to the artist and featuring several of his most emblematic series, only a few months after a retrospective exhibition held by the Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium in 2016.

Born in New York in 1950, Andres Serrano has developed both provocative and fascinating work. The artist tackles fundamental issues such as politics and society through series like *The Klan* (1990), *Nomads* (1990), *America* (2002), *Cuba* (2012), *Resident of New York* (2014), and *Denizens of Brussels* (2015); religion, with *Immersion*s (1987-1990), *The Church* (1991), *Holy Works* (2011), *Jerusalem* (2014); living beings (*Bodily Fluids*, in 1990), sex (*History of Sex*, in 1995-1996) and death (*The Morgue*, in 1992).

Andres Serrano's approach is based on showing us the world as we made it in order to raise consciousness about our time. For more than 30 years, he has been capturing the spirit of our era and the contradictions of our society by looking at it with a critical, sometime ironic, but lenient eye.

For this show, Andres Serrano presents sixteen artworks from the *Torture* series, a project he started in 2005 after being commissioned by the New York Times to illustrate an article entitled « *What We Don't Talk About When We Talk About Torture* ». Written by Joseph Lelyveld, the article looked back at Abu Ghraib's scandal for which American soldiers were accused of human rights violation based on the overwhelming evidence of photographs showing Iraqis prisoners undergoing torture.

It was only ten years after, in 2015, that the *a/political* organization offered the artist a partnership to continue the *Torture* series. Andres Serrano then travelled to fifteen cities in nine European countries such as United Kingdom, France, Austria and Germany in order to deepen his research and collect more images.

He first conceived this series as “*a show and a touristic attraction*” by photographing various historical objects related to torture and turning medieval masks into artworks as we can see in the exhibition (*Fool's Mask IV, Hever Castle, England - Fool's Mask and Flesh Gorge, Hever Castle, England - Fool's Mask III, Hever Castle, England*). These masks have the appearance of frozen face expressions, all at once raw, synthetic and perfectly expressive embodiments of torture. Paradoxically, these instruments of torture seem as terrifying and hideous as they are fascinating and unique. The known or imagined function of these objects only adds to their sensational dimension. They disturb us by incarnating the tortures they evoke and embody. “*I chose to turn disturbing objects into beautiful ones*”, commented the artist about his work.

It was at the “Fonderie”, a cultural space opened by *a/political* near Toulouse in 2013, that Andres Serrano staged this photographic series referencing several techniques and devices of torture through times. A large number of people volunteered and physically challenged themselves to experience torture for his photographs. Andres Serrano was surprised to discover: “*In doing this work, I realized that it's easy to torture people when you have power over them. My models were willing participants but real torture victims have no choice.*” Through his committed approach, the artist questions the aestheticizing representation of violence through staging.

Thanks' to the *Waging Peace* NGO, Andres Serrano entered in contact with «*Fatima*», a victim of torture, whose portrait is showcased in this exhibition. Suspecting of helping rebels in Darfur, this Sudanese woman was imprisoned and tortured by the police. The work *Fatima, was Imprisoned and Tortured in Sudan* expresses Fatima's silent screaming, the mute and smothered suffering hidden under her veil.

In Ireland, Andres Serrano photographed four men accused to having ties to IRA (Irish Republican Army): «*The Hooded Men* ». In the 1970's, *Kevin Hannaway, Francie McGiugan, Patrick McNally, and Brian Turley* were imprisoned by British authorities. They underwent specific torture and questioning treatments such as deprivation of sleep, water and food, exposure to noise or almost constant blinding under a hood. These four men survived and agreed to pose for Andres Serrano, wearing hoods again upon the artist's request.

While tortured people had their identity denied, photography captures their silence and tells their History. By hiding the victim's faces, Andres Serrano creates non-portraits where pain peaks through the covering of bodies, hence revealing the wound of torture.

With these works, Andres Serrano represents the many aspects of torture such as touristic fascination, torture as practiced in concentration camps, and torture as the ultimate punishment. This series led Andres Serrano to take up the role of both torturer and victim: the artistic experience he invites us in is representative of this ambivalence. Torture is a reality: forbidden by the Geneva Convention of 1949, nearly eighty-one countries still practice it.

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

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 recently 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).

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), *Todo Abierto* at La Friche de la Belle de Mai in Marseille (France, 2016).

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).

In 2017, Andres Serrano's work will be showcased at the Petit Palais in Paris (France) and at Huis Marseille in Amsterdam (The Netherlands).

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Ricardo Brey
All that is could be otherwise
January 7th - February 25th, 2017

Exposition de groupe
Photographies
November 10th - December 30th, 2017

Seydou Keïta
November 2016 - January 21st, 2017

Shahpour Pouyan
March 9th - May 11th 2017

Sophie Kuijken
January 7th - March 11th, 2017

Brook Andrew
February 2nd - March 18th, 2017

Jean Dubuffet et Fabrice Hyber
May 20th - July 2017

Jean Dubuffet et Fabrice Hyber
Mai 20th - July 2017

Brenna Youngblood
April 13th - May 20th, 2017

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