

Andres Serrano

PRESS RELEASE
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Petit Palais
Musée des Beaux-Arts
de la Ville de Paris

Tuesday - Sunday 10am - 6 pm

Permanent collections - Free entry

INFORMATIONS

www.petitpalais.paris.fr

At the start of the 20th century, the Petit Palais would buy the works of living artists at the Salon to build its small collection. Since the transfer of the more recent works to the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, when the latter was created in 1961, the collections of the Petit Palais have ended at the year 1914. However, to rekindle the link with contemporary creation, for each of the past three years the museum has invited a contemporary artist to dialogue with its celebrated historic collection. This autumn Andres Serrano, a leading and dissident figure on the international art scene, will take up the challenge with a presentation of forty works to be presented among the permanent collections at the Petit Palais.

Having received a classical training, Andres Serrano – “an artist with a camera”, as he likes to describe himself – derives evident inspiration for an aspect of his pictorial eloquence from the Renaissance and Caravaggism, but also from masters of modern art. By dint of this heritage, his works strike up clear relations with the paintings at the Petit Palais and thus offer an instructive comparison between the ancient and contemporary. The public is invited to view the museum's eclectic collections through the eye of this American artist. “If Serrano's work is provocative, it's because he demands that we look, straight in the eye, what today, increasingly commonly, we tend to avoid, what we prefer to ignore and not to contemplate”, wrote Daniel Arasse in *Les Transis* (1992).

The exhibition Andres Serrano opens with works from his series *Torture* (2015) and *Blood of the Flag* (2001) – the latter produced in the aftermath of 11 September – which together, in the context of the Republican décor on the ceiling of the North Gallery, demonstrates the degree to which art can be political. The portraits in his series *Nomads* (1990), *Residents of New York* (2014) and *Denizens of Brussels* (2015) are presented to visitors in the large painting gallery as pendants to major realist works by Courbet and Pelez. These monumental portraits of individuals excluded from society thunderously echo the refugee crisis and the current identity crisis that the West is suffering. The public thus discovers Andres Serrano to be a humanist artist who keeps an eye open on current events and poses questions on the universal themes pertinent to our time.

Another of Serrano's sources of inspiration is religious painting, as can be seen in his series *The Morgue* (1992) and *Holy Works* (2011), which are presented together with the paintings of Gustave Doré, Benjamin Constant and William Bouguereau.

CURATORS : **Susana Gállego Cuesta**, head curator, in charge of Petit Palais' exhibitions department, on a proposal of **Constance Dumas**, director of the Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Brussels.

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Andres Serrano, *Jewel-Joy Stevens, America's Little Yankee Miss (America)*, 2003 © Andres Serrano / Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia Paris / Bruxelles

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA
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SIACI SAINT HONORE

PARIS
MUSEES
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DE PARIS





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As a leading portraitist, Andres Serrano has depicted American society for more than thirty years with series like *Native Americans* (1995–96), *America* (2001–2004), and *Cuba* (2012), which in the Petit Palais alternate with portraits painted between the 18th century and the Belle Époque. On the ground floor, the unusual and sometimes ambivalent images in the series *The Interpretation of Dreams* (2001), *The Klan* (1990) and *Objects of Desire* (1992) allow us to take a fresh look at the historicist and symbolist collections in the museum. Concerned by universal myths and suffering, and the contradictions that these raise in today's society undergoing profound change, Serrano brings his critical yet also indulgent eye to bear and obliges us to face up to our own questioning, fears, contradictions and fantasies.

The intensity and expressiveness of the portraits and staging of the series *The Church* (1991), *Holy Works* (2011) and *Jerusalem* (2014), which are presented with the Renaissance and Baroque collections, induces the visitor to explore the subjects of the museum's masterpieces more closely. Finally, the works in the series *Immersion* (1987–90) displayed in the Hall of Antiquities brings the presentation going back in time to a close. "My work is in the eye of the viewer. The way you consider the people I photograph says a lot more about you than about me. My work is a mirror, a reflection in which you can see yourself". Andres Serrano

The exhibition is realized with the support of SIACI SAINT HONORE and Galerie Nathalie Obadia.

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