

## GAGOSIAN

### Wallpaper\*

#### Meet the artists integrating themselves into their work at Pinault Collection

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*Dancing with Myself at the Pinault Collection – Punta della Dogana opens with Urs Fischer's Untitled, 2011, a wax sculpture that melts over the course of the exhibition; and Felix Gonzalez Torres' Untitled (Blood), 1992, which visitors must pass through. Photography: Matteo de Fina*

The front gallery at Venice's Punta della Dogana used to house a double-sabre wielding warrior ferociously perched on the shoulders of a roaring bear. Cast in bronze and encrusted in coral, the sculpture – standing more than 7m high – was a raucous overture to Damien Hirst's flamboyant solo exhibition, 'Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable'. Fast forward by one year, a gently shimmering curtain of blood red glass beads by Félix González-Torres stands in its place. On one side, Urs Fischer's wax statue of a slightly hunchbacked man slowly melts as the candles on his head flicker away. This year's show, 'Dancing with Myself', trades Hirst's bombast for an altogether more introspective tone, but proves just as alluring as its predecessor.

Named after Billy Idol's 1980 pop hit, the exhibition explores the ways in which artists have integrated their bodies, images and personas into photography, video and sculpture from the 1970s to the present day – 'self-representation', as curators Martin Bethenod (managing director of the Pinault Collection) and Florian Ebner (chief curator of photography at the Centre Pompidou) call it. Self-representation, as Bethenod is careful to point out, is distinct from self-portrait. 'The artist's body is not so much the subject of their work as the instrument with which they can approach a number of themes and stances, often political ones dealing with social or racial issues, and questions of identity, gender and sexuality', he says.



*A still from Lili Reynaud-Dewar's I Am Intact and I Don't Care (Pierre Huyghe, Centre Pompidou), 2013. Courtesy the artist and Kamel Mennour, Paris*

Opening with Fischer and González-Torres (a smaller piece by the latter, tracing the decline of T-cells in the blood of an AIDS' patient, appears near the curtain), 'Dancing with Myself' suggests a sense of intimacy that at a glance, seems at odds with the monumental Tadao Ando-designed venue. But it succeeds in prompting a pensive silence as viewers then ascend the stairs into rooms filled with an impressive roster of modern and contemporary works – the photography of Lee Friedlander, Cindy Sherman and Roni Horn; the videos of Adel Abdessemed and Lili Reynaud-Dewar; and sculptures by Robert Gober, Alina Szapocznikow and Maurizio Cattelan, to name a few.

Being a collaboration between the Pinault Collection and Essen's Museum Folkwang (where Ebner was chief curator of photography until 2017), 'Dancing with Myself' deftly combines works from both institutions. This allows panoramic perspectives on some artist's careers – Sherman, for example, is represented by film stills from the Folkwang alongside four decades' worth of photos from the Pinault Collection. But it's the new dialogues among artists of different generations that leave the strongest impression.

The Folkwang lent a haunting Nan Goldin image, which shows the artist emerging from a toxic relationship with a bloodied eye and bruised face, yet a brave expression. Within the show, this shares a room with photographs from LaToya Ruby Frazier's *The Notion of Family* series, from the Pinault Collection. Three decades younger than Goldin, Frazier approaches the camera with the same bracing honesty, but also brings together three generations of immediate and extended family in her hometown of Braddock, Pennsylvania, telling a story of defiance, grace and even optimism amid industrial decline and encroaching poverty.



*Untitled #578, 2016, by Cindy Sherman. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York*

Elsewhere, a trio of Lee Friedlander's self portraits, documenting a journey through the East Coast in the 1960s joins contemporary photographs by the peripatetic Brazilian Paulo Nazareth. Titled *Noticias de America*, the series was shot as he made his way through South, and then North America on foot, visiting indigenous peoples and occasionally bearing handwritten signs that speak to their experiences of marginalisation and alienation. 'Vendo mi imagen de hombre exótico' (I sell the image of an exotic man), reads one. 'I am an American also,' says another, hoisted in front of a line of armoured police in what is ostensibly the United States.

Another room juxtaposes disembodied body parts from a range of authors. Among others, There's a single leg by Robert Gober, jutting out of a wall with a square patch removed from its black trouser to accommodate an unlit candle; an upside-down video by Bruce Nauman, zoomed in to the artist's lips as he repeats the title, *Lip Sync*; close-ups of John Coplans' palm, buttocks and heel, taken as he approached his eighth decade to challenge the convention of hiding aging bodies; a lamp sculpture by Szapocznikow, with a curious resemblance to puckered lips and an outstretched tongue. Of the latter, Bethenod says, 'it has a feminine presence that looks sweet and delicate and erotic. But in fact it might be the most violent work, because her body was suffering as she battled with cancer.'

The show is not without its confrontational moments – the works of Gilbert & George occupy a central hall, including a large-scale picture, *Blood Tears Spunk Piss*, which alternates between microscopic imagery of bodily fluids and the two artists in the nude. In the final gallery is Steve McQueen's video work, *Cold Breath*, a cinematic projection of the artist fondling his own nipple for ten minutes straight; an expression of racial and political themes for sure, but fundamentally an erotic statement. And while the exhibition excels in its more cerebral aspects, its raw physicality is also not to be overlooked.