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‘Sex, bodies and the human condition’: MONA artistic director to curate racy group show in former Swiss porn cinema

Works by Nan Goldin and Andres Serrano will feature, as well as a site-specific installation made of cowhide leather by Chiharu Shiota

Gareth Harris

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Goldin will exhibit works including the print *Showtime, Bangkok / New York, 1992 - 1995* (2019)

Works by the artists Tony Oursler, Nan Goldin and Andres Serrano will go on show in a former porn cinema later this month in a group exhibition called *Splendid: An Art Exhibition* (29 November-28 January). The show, held at the former Cinéma Splendid, is organised by Olivier Varenne, the Geneva-based art advisor and artistic director of the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), in Tasmania.

A project statement says that the organisers are “very excited to announce our takeover of the cult underground cinema, Cinéma Splendid in Geneva, replacing the porno screenings of its infamous past with a contemporary show questioning sex, bodies and the human condition.”

Cinéma Splendid, the last adult cinema in Geneva, first opened in 1951—and at this time specialised in German-language films. From the 1970s onwards it showed erotic films, and was renovated in 1988—with a “video booth” being added. The cinema comprised two classic cinema rooms, a video library and booths for “solitary and conventional pleasures”, adds the project statement.

Goldin will show a number of works including the print *C performing as Madonna, Bangkok* (1992) and *Showtime, Bangkok / New York, 1992 - 1995* (2019), while Serrano’s *Piss Satan (Immersion)* (1998) also features. The Japanese artist Chiharu Shiota has made a site-specific work for the show: an installation made of cowhide leather that is entitled *Out of My Body* (2023).

Varenne tells *The Art Newspaper*: “There’s so much shit happening around the world, huge conflicts, robots coming to replace us, that I think it’s important for us all to be reminded what it is to be human. These artists do just that: from Chiharu’s visceral piece—made for the space—to human frailty captured by Goldin to the delicious poetry of Susanna Fritscher’s sonic work [*Flügel Klängen*], [and] with Andreas Serrano adding some satanic glamour.”

Asked if the works are for sale, Varenne says: “The works are for sale [without being advertised]. They are not commercial but for sale, yes.”

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