

Maurizio Cattelan. Art and provocation

Mila Tenaglia (November 14, 2014)



After the great 2011 retrospective at the Guggenheim, NY, the irreverent works of the artist Maurizio Cattelan are back... This time there are two events: Sotheby's Auction House S/2 and Venus Over Manhattan present "Cosa Nostra", curated by the writer and art collector Adam Lindemann.

Two irreverent and provoking retrospectives, just like Maurizio Cattelan himself, are animating the city of New York. Ironic, sharp and biting artist, Cattelan continues to be the talk of town.

From Turin, where the exhibition [Shit and Die](#) [2] has recently opened in the evocative "Palazzo Cavour," the parallel variant of [Artissima One Torino](#) [3], to New York, that previously hosted the colossal exhibition [All](#) [4] at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2011.



One could define Maurizio Cattelan as an art visionary, a postmodern artist of the time who expands on popular culture as well as historical and religious concepts to shape plastic artworks that reveals the distress of society.

For the art dealer and collector [Adam Lindemann](#) [5], the time had come to once again display Cattelan's work with the exhibition [Cosa Nostra](#) [6]—an emblematic and provocative title for Italy, where a mixture of political and social satire incites criticism.

Cattelan's sculptures unveil a profound and thorough conceptual reflection of modern-day life, dramatically analysing history, society and individuals that represent an era.

A vast array of works, about twenty in total, are shared between the two galleries: S|2 Gallery, situated in one of the world's principal auction houses, Sotheby's, (Oct. 30 - Nov. 26) and on Madison Avenue at [Venus Over Manhattan](#) [7] (7 Nov. - Jan. 10, 2015), a gallery which was opened a couple of years ago by the exhibition's curator, Adam Lindemann.

We visited the Sotheby's location on the exhibition's opening night. It was a complete cultural immersion: salami and garlic hanging from the ceiling set the stage in perfect Italian style, intentionally too Italian, for a table with a red and white chequered tablecloth, with service of bread, olives and prosecco.

One then proceeds to a large, bright gallery with mirror-covered walls, reflecting the image of each individual in attendance. The exhibition's title, Cosa Nostra, is written backwards on a mirror at the entry, and reflects across the room..

Cattelan's work is based on past events which he re-interprets in a disorienting, contemporary manner, creating a sense agitation in the viewer and prompts profound reflection. These sculptures become a performance that invites direct interaction from the viewer and often elicits shock, as with Him where the viewer is in direct contact with one of history's most infamous figures: Adolf Hitler kneeling in prayer... juxtaposing God and Evil.

Untitled hyper-realistically portrays a young boy being hanged from a tree limb. The figure's gaze is piercing. There were three figures that made up the original work, all of which were executed in 2004 and installed hanging from a tree outside the [Fondazione Nicola Trussardi](#) [8] in Milan.

Another work, Ave Maria, displays three outstretched arms from a mirror in a Fascist salute, an intimidating gesture symbolizing power and strength.

The resin installation representing a girl trapped in her bed like in a modern crucifixion is inspired by a photograph of [Francesca Woodman](#) [9] from 1977.

This sculpture sums up Cattelan's oeuvre: art, profanity, provocation, and social criticism. This piece was shown for the first time in Germany on the Kölner Synagoge Stommeln façade, and at the time drew a great deal of attention.

The exhibition traces a path where the viewer is inevitably forced to asks questions; to reflect on the human condition, society and the passing of time. All of this is further enhanced by the sarcastic and razor-sharp humour of one of the greatest contemporary artists on the international scene.

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Links

[1] <http://ftp.iitaly.org/files/38901mauriziocattelanacosanostra1415751098jpg>

[2] <http://shitndie.tumblr.com/shitndie>

[3] <http://www.artissima.it/>



- [4] <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/exhibitions/past/exhibit/3961>
- [5] <http://www.adamlindemann.com/>
- [6] <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2014/maurizio-cattelan-s2-n09171.html>
- [7] <http://casaitaliananyu.org/>
- [8] <http://www.fondazionenicolatrussardi.com/>
- [9] http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francesca_Woodman