

Nowness  
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## GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Video still from Francesco Vezzoli's *Sacrilegio*, 2011  
Courtesy Gagosian Gallery

Thursday, February 3, 2011

### Francesco Vezzoli: *Sacrilegio*

**The Artist Casts Supermodels and His Mother as Madonnas in His New Show**

In his latest visual mash-up of history and celebrity, Milanese artist Francesco Vezzoli enlisted 90s supermodels Claudia Schiffer, Linda Evangelista and Stephanie Seymour

to portray Renaissance-era Madonnas in the style of Da Vinci, Botticelli and Bellini. The series marks the artist's first solo exhibition in New York, *Sacrilegio*, which sees Gagosian's Chelsea location converted into a chapel. Today we feature an exclusive still from the show's video component: a reinterpretation of Pinturicchio's 15th-century painting "Madonna with Writing Child." The thinly veiled self-portrait pictures "the child" learning needlework (one of Vezzoli's trademark mediums) alongside the artist's mother, who lipsyncs to a tune by singing nun Soeur Sourire. NOWNESS quizzed the artist on history, sacrilege and the trendiness of motherhood.

**If you could be any historical figure who would you choose?**

I would pick Marcel Proust but he lived shortly. He's immortal in the books, but he was mortal too early. I don't know... Napoleon!

**What era would you like to live in?**

The '70s. I would like to be Napoleon in the '70s.

**What would you change, if anything, about the past?**

Social injustice. Whenever you say you want to be Napoleon or Julius Caesar you can't help thinking that when those people were alive social injustice was huge. Now, it's a bit less.

**And the present?**

Nightclubs—they're terrible.

**What would be the most sacrilegious thing you could do?**

To dishonor my family. Because they love me and they made me and they nurture me.

**If a Freudian were to give a reading on your version of "Madonna with Writing Child" what would they say?**

A badly repressed Oedipus complex, unsuccessfully repressed.

**Is there any Renaissance-era craft or artform that is due for a comeback?**

I'm re-launching Madonnas because maternity and parenthood seems to be the new Fendi bag. Everybody's obsessed. Once upon a time the biggest movie star, Elizabeth Taylor, had seven husbands, and now the biggest movie star, Angelina Jolie, has seven kids.