

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

BLOUINARTINFO

Francesco Vezzoli to Exhibit at Pitti Uomo

Michelle Tay



*Francesco Vezzoli's self-portrait as Apollo del Belvedere's Lover
(Courtesy Francesco Vezzoli)*

As the fashion set descends upon the men's collections at Pitti Uomo in Florence from June 17-20, artist Francesco Vezzoli is hoping to draw some of them to the city's more intimate museums by inserting some previously created supermodels-as-Madonnas into the mix.

Helping the city of Florence celebrate its 60th year as "Firenze Hometown of Fashion," Brescia-born Vezzoli is holding his first Florentine exhibition, Vezzoli Primavera-Estate, in three off-the-beaten-path bastions of Florentine culture: the Museo Bardini, Museo di Casa Martelli and the Museo Bellini.

Having deliberately avoided the iconic Galleria Uffizi, Vezzoli has conceived his show as an exercise in artistic camouflage, as his pieces will rather stealthily infiltrate each museum as if they were "impertinent intruders", stimulating the viewer to find — and make — comparisons with the existing collections, which include masterpieces from Diego Velazquez, Donatello, Verrocchio and Sebastiano del Piombo.

In the Museo Bardini's Sala delle Madonne (Room of the Madonnas), for instance, the artist will place two Madonnas he previously created — "Crying Portrait of Stephanie Seymour as a Renaissance Madonna with Holy Child" and "Crying Portrait of Christie Brinkley as a Renaissance Madonna with Holy Child" — amidst a group of stucco and terracotta pieces made by some of the most important 15th century Florentine workshops. In the Museo Bellini's Sala De Chirico (De Chirico Room), the artist will hang two paintings portraying Sophia

Loren alongside the “Cavallo con cavaliere arabo,” while in the Sala degli Arazzi (Room of the Tapestries) he will replace a late 16th-century piece from the Flemish school with “A Present for the Artist,” which is dedicated to Marina Abramovic. Last but not least, in the chapel of the Museo di Casa Martelli that features Madonnas attributed to the school of Filippo Lippi, Vezzoli will exhibit his self-portrait, a sculpture entitled “Self-Portrait As a Self-Portrait” (after Raffaello Sanzio).

Speaking to Blouin Artinfo, Vezzoli explained, “Recently I have been doing sculptures and other works that relate in a very strong and direct way with the history of art of my country, and here I took the challenge with mixing my art with these historic masterpieces. I singled out a few small museums in Florence, because I always loved the small houses that belonged to professors or antiquarians. They contextualize art within the sensibility of the owner which for me is very important. When you go to these smaller places you are by yourself, the level of concentration you can achieve is much higher, and you can have a stronger emotional experience seeing something in a different environment.”

His aim, Vezzoli added, is to “analyze and establish what’s relevant and valuable. In terms of market value, my marble head on the market is more expensive than the original Roman tunic, and for me that is completely unbelievable. I’d felt so much pressure at my last show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, but this project gives me the opportunity to do something different, and I’m grateful to the city of Florence for allowing me to fool around.”