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MOCA to Present Hollywood-Inspired ‘Cinema Vezzoli’ Exhibition

The Italian artist, who has collaborated with stars from Lady Gaga to Roman Polanski, will debut tapestries that combine popular Hollywood culture with Greek mythology in downtown L.A. on April 27.

Alexa Girkout



Courtesy of artist

The Museum of Contemporary Art will unveil new work and earlier work by Italian artist Francesco Vezzoli in an upcoming exhibition that examines Hollywood cinema and celebrity culture through a critical and satirical lens.

MOCA Grand is slated to debut *Cinema Vezzoli*, which will feature a new series by the Milan based artist that looks closely at how entertainment media, television and film have fueled a modern obsession with fame and publicity, the museum confirmed Wednesday.

“I think this is the perfect city, contextually, to present Francesco’s work,” Alma Ruiz, MOCA’s senior curator tells *The Hollywood Reporter*. “A lot of our visitors will understand what he’s trying to say, and for those who don’t, we’ll have extended labels and wall text to explain the film references contained in the work.”

In the 2008 piece “Wo-man Ray,” Vezzoli addresses the female image and the female body as he references the famous surrealist artist Man Ray. The sculpture features the head of actress Anita Ekberg from *La Dolce Vita* on the body of a classic marble bust. Ekberg is crying and her

streaming tears display the faces of famous actresses. The work references art, cinema and female in beauty in one work, Ruiz says.

The exhibition will also feature pseudo movie posters including a 2006 piece called “All About Anni,” which features the faces of actress Marlene Dietrich and German-American artist Anni Albers.

Cinema Vezzoli is the second component of a three-part endeavor showcasing Vezzoli's work. The series began at the National Museum of XXI Century Arts in Rome and will culminate at MoMA PS1 in New York. The second exhibition, which arrives at MOCA on April 27, will feature a series of tapestries that fuses the history of Hollywood cinema with the allegories of Greek mythology.

“Our visitors will have an opportunity to learn about Francesco’s interest in and his own interpretation of the female character as presented in movies; they will learn about the filmmakers that have deeply influenced his artistic vocabulary; they will see a series of videos featuring actors we have become very familiar with; and they will see a new work that Francesco will debut in L.A.,” Ruiz says. “They will get to know how multifaceted Francesco’s work is.”

Vezzoli is known for his fascination with filmmaking and the Hollywood lifestyle and analyzing its integration with the public sphere. He has worked with countless stars including Cate Blanchett, Eva Mendes and Helen Mirren to produce performance art that spoofs contemporary American celebrity culture in the context of classic European cinema. Mirren starred alongside Courtney Love in a remake parody trailer of Gore Vidal's *Caligula*; Mendes participated in a rereading of *La Dolce Vita*.

By the time Ruiz met Vezzoli in Italy in 2001, the artist had already partnered up with a number of prominent Hollywood personalities.

“Francesco somehow had found a way to convince famous actors and performers to collaborate with him for free,” Ruiz said. “They would agree to appear in his videos, to be directed by a young, unknown artist, because they believed in what he was doing. That was quite remarkable to me.”

Vezzoli’s work has been featured at MOCA three times. In 2012, he donated “GREED, A New Fragrance by Francesco Vezzoli” a 60-second commercial that mimicked perfume advertisements. It starred Academy Award-nominated actresses Natalie Portman and Michelle Williams and was directed by Roman Polanski.

His performance work “Ballets Russes Italian Style (The Shortest Musical You Will Never See Again)” was performed at MOCA’s 30th anniversary gala in 2009, and featured Lady Gaga and dancers from the Bolshoi Ballet.

His first contribution to the museum was a work titled “A Love Trilogy: Self-Portrait with Marisa Berenson as Edith Piaf” in 2001.

The exhibition, presented by yoox.com, will be on display from April 27 to Aug. 11 at 250 S. Grand Ave. in Los Angeles.