

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



On View | MOCA Hosts a Retrospective of Francesco Vezzoli's Star-Studded Art

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Milla Jovovich in Francesco Vezzoli's "Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's Caligula," 2005, now on view at "Cinema Vezzoli" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Matthias Vriens, courtesy of Tate Modern, London, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York

The old-Hollywood hangout Musso and Frank Grill was an appropriate venue for a dinner last Friday celebrating Francesco Vezzoli's new retrospective at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. Decades ago, iconic stars of a screen era that has long inspired the artist — from Charlie Chaplin to Greta Garbo — dined at the wood-paneled restaurant's signature red booths. The Italian artist is perhaps most famous for his videos featuring stars like Michelle Williams and Natalie Portman; on Friday, a host of L.A. luminaries — including Bret Easton Ellis and Kate and Laura Mulleavy of Rodarte — turned out to show their support.

The last time Vezzoli appeared at the museum was in 2009, in a headline-grabbing performance with Lady Gaga, who sang "Speechless" on a butterfly-decorated pink Steinway as Vezzoli sat and embroidered beside her. (Embroidery has long been a motif in his work.) "That was more crazy and Dionysian and mad," he said of the earlier performance. The current retrospective, he says, is "more of a serious assessment of all the elements in my work." Splashy videos are featured in the show — including his parodic trailer, with Milla Jovovich and Courtney Love, for a fictitious production of Gore Vidal's "Caligula." But there are also quieter pieces, like portraits of old-Hollywood celebrities, sparkly tears added to their faces via metallic-thread needlework. According to Vezzoli, however, this latest exhibition marks the end of his obsession with stars of the silver screen. "I was so lucky I could work with these amazing actresses," he said. "I had my

piece of Hollywood cake, with my own recipe. Some of it was bitter, most of it was sweet. I had so much to the point of being nauseated — and this show tells that entire story.”

“Cinema Vezzoli” is on view through Aug. 11 at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, 250 South Grand Avenue, moca.org.