



Jean Cocteau, Adriano Costa, Solange Pessoa, Tarsila do Amaral, Sarah Lucas and Julian Simmons,  
Eliseu Visconti, Erika Verzutti, Daniel Correa Mejía, Xie Lei, Athos Bulcão, Francis Picabia,  
Antonio Obá, Daniel Lannes, Robert Mapplethorpe, Soufiane Ababri, Andy Warhol, Jean-Daniel Cadinot,  
Joseph Caprio, Tom of Finland, Martine Riviere, Luc Geslin, Osmar Schindler, Patrick Safarti,  
Alexandre Maspoli, Pierre Paul Montagnac, Bruce Weber, Wilhelm Von Gloeden, Raymond Carrance,  
Guglielmo Von Plüschow, Mark Beard, Larry Clark, C.J Wielhorski, Léon Galand,  
Ugo Cipriani, Agence Fulgur, Jean Ferrero, Sacha Schneider, Gustavo Silvamaral,  
Fernanda Azou, Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, Patrick Angus, Rodolpho Parigi, Luiz Roque,  
Wolfgang Tillmans, Wallace Pato, Paula Siebra, Patricia Leite, Paulo Nazareth

*Male Nudes: a salon from 1800 to 2021*

Mendes Wood DM São Paulo

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Mendes Wood DM is proud to present the group exhibition *Male Nudity: a salon from 1800 to 2021*. Intersecting representations of the male nude, the show proposes to reflect on the concepts of copy, imitation, image, time and decline.

According to conventional historiography, the first representation of nudity in the history of humankind was found at an archeological site in Austria. The Venus of Willendorf was classified as an artifact from 30,000 BCE in 1906. Historical-scientific evidence suggests that the piece originated in France and was carried by nomadic populations as a sort of fertility goddess. Jumping from the Paleolithic era to the end of modern history, the exhibition traverses several concepts and reflections on nudity, such as ordinary and essential representations in Greek and Egyptian art; the criminalization of nudity as a Christian tool of power and expansion; the Italian renaissance; responses to and imitations of the Greeks; baroque hyper-naturalism; and the vernacular gaze of contemporary photographers as proposed by Spinoza – the body as an integral and integrated part of nature.

It would be impossible to dissociate the male nude from the social and thus political representation of masculinity in our Anthropocene. In fact, this association is fundamental in any discussion about body and image. The representation of violent and absolutely distorted male superiority and the exercise of male dominance over dissident bodies have been proclaimed as “normal” or “natural” throughout history. The alleged authority of masculinity is closely linked to an idea of sex where “real” men must be sexually “potent” and exude “sexual power”. Lacking an accurate understanding of human sexuality, man considers “sex” as yet another tool of power, domination and control; therefore, representations of the male body are morally rejected, whilst representations of the female body are seen as natural beauty, and an object of ownership and consummation.

When reflecting on the representation of power as a way of oppressing language and all its possible repercussions, the male nude can be understood as a means of challenging male power through the “feminization” of the form, suggesting fragility in the language generated by the image.

This refusal of power in favor of natural beauty found fertile ground in Ancient Greece; in several observational drawings produced by the *École Française du XIXème* that draw on the decline of the body and show a tragic perspective of humanity; in the anatomical gaze that gives way to the transformation of the body into a product and reproduction in Warhol’s photocopied *Torsos*; in the vernacular recordings of youth by Larry Clark; and in the documentation of the male body’s transformations and possibilities in Fernanda Azou’s paintings of her transsexual brother.

This exhibition proposes to explore history without its own weight, without the contrived character of time weighing on the artist’s works. The absence of rules will allow a body-scale drawing by Picabia to interact with Solange Pessoa’s erotic drawings that evoke images found in Brazilian archeological sites. While intersecting Mapplethorpe’s male body adoration and Wilhelm Von Gloeden’s mythological narratives, the show also converges the perspective of Tarsila do Amaral and Eliseu Visconti as modern observers of form.

These works are presented as constellations of bodies present in art, bringing together, in a reference to the *Salon des Refusés* of 1787, a representation of the body that evokes a game of imitation inherent to artistic practice, both in its moral aspect and as a language tool, fully exposing the fragilities of the portrayed body, its impossibility, beauty and temporality