

THROUGH THEIR EYES:

Selections from the
Sandretto Re Rebaudengo
Collection

January 26–June 22, 2025



Introduction



Ambera Wellmann, *To a Girl in a Garden*, 2023. Oil on linen, 68 x 70 in. Courtesy of Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. © Ambera Wellmann.

The renowned Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Collection, based in Turin, Italy, was established in 1992 by Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, one of the foremost contemporary art collectors in the world. *Through Their Eyes: Selections from the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Collection* is the first presentation of the collection in the United States, and honors one of its focuses: supporting women artists.

The exhibition brings together painting, photography, sculpture and video by some of the most prominent artists working today, as well as rising new voices. It spans 45 years of art making, presenting the world as experienced by 30 fiercely original and groundbreaking women artists.

The works in this exhibition touch on the construction and projection of identity — and on gender and the body in particular — by flipping the gaze to privilege the lived experience from a female perspective. Organized into six thematic sections, each intergenerational grouping confronts structures that bind women to gendered roles and archetypes, and in doing so, points out the fallacy behind these constructions. Together, these works exemplify the many ways artists challenge the status quo by envisioning different ways of being.

Susie Kantor, Exhibition Curator

Infinite Possibilities

Andra Ursuța / Vanessa Beecroft / Berlinde De Bruyckere /
Christina Quarles / Ambera Wellmann / Anj Smith / Ana Elisa Egreja /
Lynette Yiadom-Boakye / Paulina Olowaska / Katja Novitskova

I am often just looking for an arrangement with the bodies that actually feels impossible, in order to create a diagram for what kind of infinite possibilities the body can have.

– Ambera Wellmann

These artists contemplate infinite possibilities around gender and sexuality in image making and how the body is pulled apart and made malleable. Some of them look at the body as an elastic form that bends toward something dark. Andra Ursuța's *Doppel Chain Ganger* (2015) evokes images of slavery and BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadism, masochism), where autonomy is replaced with bondage. For Vanessa Beecroft, the body is a site of self-disgust, even rejection; in *Disegno* (1995), the figure's attenuated form is emphasized by its larger-than-life presence. These artists emphasize suffering and how we lose control of our physical and psychic selves.

Christina Quarles, on the other hand presents the human form as a site of multiplicity — not as a sign of suffering, but as a way of disrupting societally entrenched ideas about bodies, people and identity. Similarly, Anj Smith explores the malleability of the body and what it means to endure within it, to express “how it feels from the inside out to exist against the backdrop of ongoing toxicity.” Smith's *This Knot Intrinsic* (2018) inverts the trope of the female nude by covering her figure with plants like a second skin, suggesting interiority and protection. For Ana Elisa Egreja, the body disappears entirely; her paintings, like *Tropical Paradise: Green still life with Cobogos* (2020), are highly constructed still lifes that have residues of human existence without the human form, challenging the viewer to consider the impact of its absence.



Anj Smith, *This Knot Intrinsic*, 2018-19. Oil on linen, 19 ¾ x 17 ¼ inches. Courtesy of Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. © Anj Smith.

Systems of Value

Sarah Lucas / Sherrie Levine / Jumana Manna / Jana Euler /
Rosemarie Trockel / Isa Genzken



Sarah Lucas, *Nice Tits*, 2011. Tights, fluff, wire mesh frame, concrete boots, 208 × 160 × 60 cm. Courtesy of Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo.
© Sarah Lucas. Photo: Maurizio Elia.

Here the artists create a form of visual synecdoche — using a part to stand in for the whole — to draw attention to outdated notions around gender, from cultural appropriation to sexist stereotypes. Sherrie Levine's *Body Mask* (2007) isolates a female torso inspired by body masks that men wear to represent young, pregnant women in ceremonies of the Makonde ethnic group in Tanzania and Mozambique. Levine removes the masks from their historical and cultural contexts and casts them in bronze. This physical and metaphorical recasting both deliberately emphasizes cultural appropriation and sexualizes the forms, calling attention to how gender and bodies are valued.

Sarah Lucas deftly uses humor to draw attention to the ways that women are reduced to the most sexualized parts of the female body. *Nice Tits* (2013) capitalizes on the well-known and oft-used catcall, turning what would be the head and torso of the figure into a multitude of breasts. Humorous and incisive, Lucas uses everyday materials (pantyhose, fluff, concrete) and negative space to cut to the core of the way that women and their bodies are often seen solely as objects of desire, rather than fully fleshed out human beings.

Also using humor and exaggeration, Jana Euler highlights the undervaluation of women in the art world, playfully critiquing the historical link between painting and male virility in *GWF 4* (2019), from her series *Great White Fear*. In her painting, a larger-than-life shark, which doubles as a penis, rises out of the water in fear and confusion. Likewise, Isa Genzken fundamentally challenges the construction of painting, using her body and the floor to create the works from the *Basic Research* series. Exploring materials to their limits, Genzken applied paint to the floor of her studio, and then the canvas over it. This transference of paint by her body — alongside dirt, debris and other imperfections from the floor — creates something between painting, sculpture and performance.

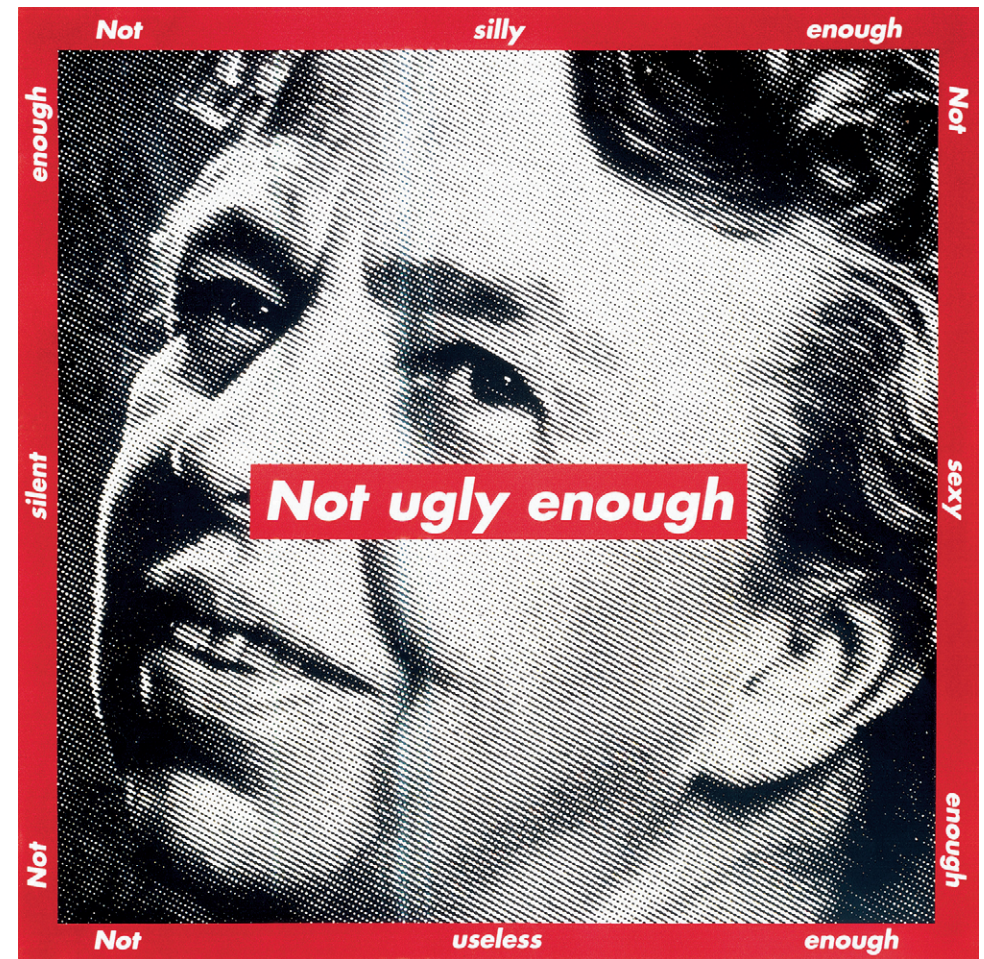
Becoming A Commodity

Giulia Andreani / Barbara Kruger / Cindy Sherman

Giulia Andreani, Barbara Kruger and Cindy Sherman focus on how women are commodified in ways that demean, exploit and confine them to specific societal roles. They use the language of advertising and archival and historical documents to emphasize these impossible expectations. The isolation of the image, whether through the exclusive use of a particular pigment or the layering of text and image to mimic advertisements, serves to point out the absurdity of these demands.

Andreani confronts the role of women in society by combining Payne's Grey, a bluish-gray paint, with source material from archival photographs, historical documents and advertisements, in order to focus sharply on a single image. In *Nudeltisch (Spaghetti Painting)* (2019), for example, she uses an image of 1950s pinups to emphasize the sexualization of the women, who smile as they lustily devour mouthfuls of spaghetti.

Coming from a graphic design and publishing background, Barbara Kruger merges the imagery of advertising with cutting phrases to create social and political commentary. In *Untitled (Not ugly enough)* (1997), she pairs an image of former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt with the text "Not ugly enough." Kruger explicitly states the ways that women do not measure up to impossible standards, by being "not ugly enough, not silent enough, not silly enough, not sexy enough, not useless enough."



Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (Not ugly enough)*, 1997. Silkscreen on vinyl, 107 ¼ x 107 ¼ in. Courtesy of Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. © Barbara Kruger.

The Private and The Public Body

Shirin Neshat / Zoe Leonard / Mona Hatoum



Zoe Leonard, *Wig*, 1991. Gelatin silver print, 18 7/8 x 13 3/8 in. Courtesy of Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. © Zoe Leonard.

“Inserted into the aestheticized space of a gallery, the hair beads – elegant and repulsive – address the disparities between the private and the public body.”¹

What happens when bodily autonomy is stripped away through social, political or institutional controls? Zoe Leonard, Mona Hatoum and Shirin Neshat examine how the female body continues to be a site of institutional and gendered warfare. With subjects spanning from the 19th century through today, these artists draw attention to how women’s bodies have been historical battlegrounds.

While Leonard and Hatoum focus on physical objects, Neshat’s film speaks to the metaphorical ways that control is exerted over women throughout the world, as well as what happens when the deeply personal is made public. *Possessed* (2001) follows an unstable woman who mutters to herself as she wanders the streets of Iran, her hair loose and uncovered by a hijab. The crowds ignore her until she finds a platform from which to command an audience. As the public surrounding her submits to the same madness, she slowly drifts away from the scene, leaving chaos in her wake.

¹“2013.16: Hair Necklace,” Harvard Art Museums, accessed September 18, 2024. <https://harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/348038>.

The Notion of the Façade

Tracey Moffatt / Catherine Opie / Cindy Sherman / Shirin Neshat / Sarah Lucas / Hellen van Meene

They're both about the notion of the facade, and body modification is as much of a facade as architecture.

– Catherine Opie

Many of the artists defy expectations of gender — from activities divided along antiquated lines to refusing to conform to societally approved ideas of gendered behavior. In the earliest works in the exhibition, a suite of photographs from Cindy Sherman's iconic *Untitled Film Stills* series from the 1970s, we see Sherman dressed in a variety of what many would consider dated tropes of expected femininity: the bored housewife, the ingenue, the saucy vixen. These reductive personas are drawn from the visual culture of movies from the 1950s and '60s but are in fact fabrications of Sherman's imagination. Although Sherman herself poses in the photographs, these are not self-portraits, but rather a way to poke at how gender is a construct regardless of a camera being present.

Tracey Moffatt plays with gender expectations in her photographs *Doll Birth*, 1992 (1994) and *Useless*, 1974 (1994), pointing to the ways that these expectations are conditioned and reinforced from childhood. Whether forbidding young boys to play at giving birth or calling a young woman useless as she washes her father's car, Moffatt calls attention to the potentially damaging nature of these strict behavioral rules.

Hellen van Meene's photographs of an adolescent girl capture her subject in between girlhood and adulthood, with markers of both. The ambiguity of the sitter's status, and the resulting tension as we gaze upon her partially exposed, pubescent body, asks when the performance of gender, and its resulting expectations, begins. Yet the photographs are made with care towards her subject, with adolescent ennui neither coddled nor exploited.



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #22*, 1978. Gelatin silver print, 7 7/8 x 10 in. Courtesy of Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. © Cindy Sherman.

In Front of the Camera/ Behind the Scenes

Nan Goldin / Paulina Olowaska / Jill Mulleady / Wangari Mathenge /
Danielle Mckinney



Paulina Olowaska, *Backstage-Belarusian Ballet*, 2018. Oil on canvas, 102 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 78 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Courtesy of Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. © Paulina Olowaska.

Here the artists address two sides of one coin: What happens in front of the camera (the performative side) and behind the scenes (a space of intimacy) and how both are used to expand ideas of existing more freely in the world. Nan Goldin is well known for her raw, unflinching documentation of her life and that of her friends in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, where she put on public display the beauty, seediness, discomfort and joys of the time. For the works on view, we see Joey, one of her frequent subjects, in stages of undress, in the bedroom, and enjoying life. Joey's unabashed abandon in front of the camera reinforces the artificiality of images by Sherman, Moffatt and even Neshat. At the same time, it can still be read as a performance of what a woman is supposed to be in front of the camera.

In Paulina Olowaska's monumental *Backstage - Belarusian Ballet* (2018) she captures a moment with two ballerinas pre- or post-performance. As they let down their guard and gaze at themselves in the mirror, a man looms at the door, reminding us that womanhood is always, in some way, on display.

Jill Mulleady's *Interior* (2019), an intimate scene between friends or lovers, and Wangari Mathenge's *The Ascendants IX (Just Like My Parent's House, I've Become a Visitor)* (2020), which privileges the Black experience in a space of respite, are scenes meant to happen off camera. And Danielle Mckinney's exquisite paintings of women in repose draw deeper into these moments of interiority, of moments not meant for public consumption.

About the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Collection and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo

The Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Collection is one of the most important private collections of contemporary art in Europe. It first saw the light of day in 1992 and has been growing ever since. It comprises over 2,000 artworks by both emerging young artists and artists of international renown which have been displayed in museums throughout Italy, France, Spain, Austria, Poland and the United Kingdom.

Established in 1995, the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo is a not-for-profit institution reflecting the guidelines of a new form of art patronage based on a sharing of interests, skills and individual resources. One of the first private foundations to have been set up in Italy, the Fondazione sets out to act as an observatory of today's artistic trends and cultural styles, marking the development of the private collection and its transition towards an organized activity open to the public. In its Turin and Guarene venues, as well as its Art Park, also in Guarene, the Fondazione organizes and promotes exhibitions, activities and projects focusing on contemporary artists. Since 1995, the Fondazione has supported young Italian and international artists by commissioning and producing new works, promoting contemporary art and attracting an ever-growing participating public.

The Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Collection's first U.S. presentation is intentionally at a university museum, reflecting the educational focus of the collection and foundation.

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