

## **ANDRES SERRANO**

If his name incites violence perpetrated on flesh, his work is far closer to the filthy preciousness of reliquaries. Sacred beauty of depravity, spritzing yellow bubbles and a cibachrome-orange tint. The sacrificial item's elsewhere, beyond grasp, rendered unconsumable and inconceivable. Even the jar containing the original configuration can't be conceived.

## ANDY WARHOL

Why did he husband his faith after having promoted the canning of food? A child's eye surrendering to the stained glass windows of the Church of Saint Jean Chrysostome already sucks in solace. Sensuously sinking into their oblong shapes. Base senses overtake loftier, recharged by the bright colors of Byzantine frescos. A bundle of flesh, muscles and nerves on edge, he wanders around, sniffing, feeling his way, lunging at columns and licking dank walls. Afterward, he will forge the myth of his first baby steps relative to his restlessness at that instant. He will live solely in his exhalation, in his gaze, his desire to enjoy that image and to endlessly reproduce it so he can enjoy it over and over. The game's so clear he sees himself through it.

Back at the family homestead, he comes across a crucifix placed on a mantelpiece. This very familiar object opens floodgates to forthcoming troubles. Julia, daughter of the ocean, absent mother of mercy, ascends to a silent cloud swathed in blue. The kitten died (*Little Hester who left for pussy heaven*). A reproduction of the *Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci is slipped into the book of prayers, which will bring to a close the artist's candy pink period. After years of crazed retifism, rows of cans and bottles of Coke, celebrity portraits and road wrecks, surges an ecstasy crushed by a pain that rips through his gut. Surfacing unseen, the specter expands and contracts in the same pulse of adaptation. The slow and tiresome enumeration of the smallest details of the room summons the intricately woven part of his mind in which everything possible and everything unimaginable are intertwined. The moment vanishes, and we're left with joy upon awakening, in perfect harmony with everything around us.

## ANTONIO LOBO ANTUNES

You who scaled peaks, where you experienced beauty and death made you stronger every day. There you lay prostrate, overcome, like a rat. Your trembling hands, your arms and legs so pale, wrenched in some kind of spasm. You try to crawl a bit further, but your body no longer belongs to you, you no longer feel your thighs, and your clothes hang heavy with fresh blood. Your handsome blue eyes open wide, your pupils dilate, your jaws clench. There's a metallic aftertaste in your throat. Your tongue is parched and scorched. Your unscathed intelligence listens for diagnoses. Every word, every line you will write for that child's face ashen against the light. You would whisper something to him, but you fall asleep without knowing what's new, what future to speak and speak again.

## SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

Daughter of a cloth dyer, Catherine is the twenty-third child of a cantankerous middle-class woman who gave up breastfeeding her twin sister, hoping that at least one of them would thrive. Weaning occurs very early, and the nipple is immediately coated with the bitter juice of aloe at the start of the next pregnancy. A part of the scrawny little girl dies with her own twin's extinction and she decides never to marry. Future patron of anorexic body artists, she shuns all sustenance except for a crust of bread and some lumps of oatmeal. Quenching her thirst in the blood and sweat of the crucified, satiated with the good and holy desire for the salvation of souls, she's reborn from the openings in the flesh of torture victims. She knows that life resides within those wounds and glimpses her salvation in an intuitive vision of the revolutionary vocation of the water fast. Later on, Catherine cuts her hair, renounces every kind of nourishment and officially launches her political career. She will write many dialogs and nearly four hundred letters addressed to citizens, priests, prelates and the pope. One day, her abused flesh will peel away from its skeleton, as if to embody the vanity of all this turmoil, all those fears that torment us. Our time is short, run without carelessness and without ignorance. The exquisite agony of holy desire ends with life.

In a painting by Giovanni di Paolo she holds a book in her left hand and in the other a lily stalk. Her head is tilted at a slight angle, bathed in gold, and as pale as the veil that envelops her. Her long emaciated fingers seem as fragile as crystal. Her sallow eyes are tired but haven't given up, her pupils shrunken but not empty. Her gaze retains a keenness that breaks beyond the panel's confines, carrying the young woman beyond common sensation. The starched folds of her white dress and her dark cloak bestow a more literal meaning to the work, something more solid, and which banishes any ordinary feelings of sadness and pity. Two sickly cherubs flank the saint. Squished onto the wooden panel, their ordinariness contrasts with the striking strangeness of this figure simultaneously so specific and so indeterminant.