

Flash Art



JEAN-LUC VERNA; * Nick Ut, Kim Phuc Phan Thi, Sud-Vietnam, 8 juin 1972 * Diamanda Galas, "Sono l'Antecristo," 1981; 2001. Silver print/aluminum, wood frame, Plexiglas; 163 x 128 cm. Courtesy Air de Paris.

TARBES, FRANCE

Jean-Luc Verna at Le Parvis

You should listen to the Cramps or Siouxsie Sioux while reading this review. Jean-Luc Verna played these two discs again and again during his opening, creating the perfect soundtrack for his artworks. Odile Biec, the new director of this crazy contemporary art center stuck in the middle of a mall, curated this superb solo show together with the artist in a perfect classical style, as if the gallery were a drawing room at the Louvre. The art of Jean-Luc Verna is a transgender crossing, from the mannerist painter Jacopo

Pontorno to punk and new-wave idols such as Iggy Pop and Diamanda Galas. Verna's drawings on silk or paper, make-up wall drawings, and photographs function on the basis of an iconoclastic mix, including the Beaux-Arts academic tradition and the gothic music style, mythological legends and comix superheroes, Hollywood and High Art. As Baudrillard said, we are all symbolically transsexuals. The very special gender-bender style of Verna, posing nude on high heels, his body covered with

star tattoos, maintaining the pose of a rock star on stage, mingled with references to famous images from the history of photography (Helmut Newton's *Big Nudes*, for example), reminds us that our fantasies are modeled by the entertainment and cultural industries. But the self is resisting. The joyful transgression Verna proposes invites us to give in to the pleasure of being alive. Which is too rare in today's politically correct art world not to be mentioned.

—Pascal Beausse