

IN-BETWEEN, UNCANNY ZONE

Zurich, April 2025

In his artistic practice, MITCHELL ANDERSON looks at the gray areas of our daily realities – from the presence of violence in our lives from the moment of birth to collective objectifications that we wrap ourselves with in online discourses. As the artist's solo show *Sonnet* at the Bernheim gallery in London comes to a close next week, he spoke to us about coding and encoding information in his work, hunting for objects with wonky meaning, and Luigi Mangione's shirtless photos.



Your latest exhibition *Sonnet* takes its name from a literary form. What about sonnets as a concept resonated with you while working on this body of work?

For the last ten years or so, every exhibition that I've had has been the classic single-room show. But this time around, the exhibition is spread across multiple floors and multiple rooms, and the way I often things is a little bit weird – I don't plan them visually and make models, I do it textually and have a document that lists all the rooms and floors. So when I was planning which works would be shown in which spaces, I started to think about how a poem can be juggling with repetitions, with slight changes, with a twist – thinking about the rhythm within each room and the rhythm of the entire space. So when it came to throwing a title, I thought that it made sense.



Left: *Solar Piece*, 2024, Infinitely printed Oxford reprint with internal light string

Right: *The Human Seasons*, 2024, Playing cards on panel

Working textually is perhaps linked to your attraction towards coding, which is a big part of your playing cards series that you have been developing for the past ten years. What makes you want to come back to this medium again and again?

I think that the reason I return to it is that there's a really interesting twist that happens for me with it. I'll see a new set of cards and start thinking about how to get across what's not pictured on them into the piece through a code. I initially started these pieces when I bought a box of playing cards packs in Hong Kong that had Princess Diana on them with all of her different looks. And then I was playing around with them and figuring out a code so that I could spell texts out of them. I thought that was a genius when I figured it out, but then I Googled it and learned that it already exists. [Laughs] You know, in translation environments, we could be at a bar, and I could pass you a message using the cards and then shuffle shuffle them so that it's gone. And so, when I was thinking about Princess Diana, I thought that the code should have something to do with her end in the pictures. You have these playing cards of this very famous woman that feature everything in her life, excepting missing the very important part, which was her death. So the original Princess Diana pieces that I started with would have something to do with the car crash.

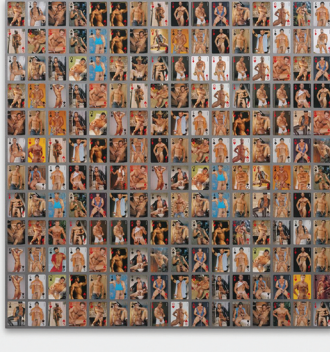
When I see a new deck of cards, I'm always thinking of what text could be coded with it. That's probably why I continue making them. But also, the reason why I'm so excited about them is that the code lets me step back, and I can claim that I have no impact on the composition – I didn't come up with it, the text did. It's always interesting for me to not know what's going to happen and how the piece is going to look.



Support piece, 2022, Limited Edition, Ursula Bernheim B&W, Artistic Classic, Jockstrap, torso display

You went from Princess Diana to Luigi Mangione, creating decks of cards featuring found shirtless images of him that people have been thirsting over online, which are used for one of the works in the show. Why did you decide to use him as a symbol? What is the code there?

Well, I am also a human male. [Laughs] I knew probably within 24 hours of those first photos coming out that I could make those cards because they would work with my show. In the exhibition, there are three other works that are made with cards featuring gay porn stars from the early 2000s. And with Luigi, he was simultaneously an object and an idea, right? What he did and what he stood for combined perfectly with his look the second it happened. And that led me to how I think about those vintage porn cards where they are both depicting people and objects. They exist in this in-between uncanny zone. It's hard for me to imagine that any of them are real people. And I think it's equally hard for me to imagine that Luigi Mangione is too in a way.



Left: *Sonnet* to Chatterbox, 2023, COLT Naked Bodies playing cards, singles and dispersion on panel

Right: *Sonnet* to Byron, 2020, COLT Naked Bodies and COLT Harry Chord playing cards, singles and dispersion on panel

It's interesting to think of Luigi as a modern porn star, and the fact that we're overlooking the violence part that surrounds him...

It's a very gray situation, it's more gray than either of the other – people supporting him versus people wanting to incriminate him – abuse is both. And I'm really attached to those unsettled areas in my life and work. We're very imperfect as a society and as creatures, and I think we're made by these gray areas.

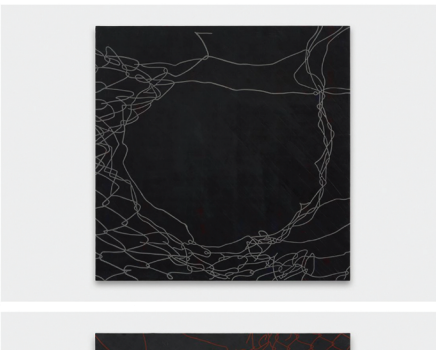


Left: *Peace*, 2024–2025, Ballroom, features as film

Right: *From Endgame* (A thing of beauty is a joy forever), 2025, Playing cards and dispersion on panel

The gray area of violence is something that's a big part of the ready-made section in the exhibition, which focuses on uncovering the presence of violence in our lives from birth to death. Tell me more about these three works.

All of these sculptures come from part of my studio practice that consists of looking for objects, either online or in person. And so, I was going through about four billion objects on this hospital supply site when I found the Circumcised newborn immobilizer. I thought that it was a great object because even if you didn't know what the object was exactly used for, you could not confuse its purpose (of restricting movement). It's kind of a beautiful object, but it's just so violent. And then the fact that the steel and baby blue makes you immediately realize what's gone on there. We are given all this information that we encode. That's my obsession with the objects that exist in this world, the fact that there's so much information left inside of them. If you look at them, there are just a lot of small confusing choices that make sense at the time, but they compound to psychotic choices. That's who I was with the jockstrap that I introduced in the next sculpture – not one of the choices made was wrong while producing it, but all of them together create this really weird dynamic where you're trying to support Ukraine through selling the jockstrap that's blue and yellow. There's no negative choice made by a single person, but the world is so wonky that the amalgamation of those little choices makes these really amazing sculptures appear.



Top left: *Harlequin (prod)*, 2024, Encaustic on panel

Top right: *Harlequin (prod)*, 2024, Encaustic on panel

Bottom left: *Harlequin (prod)*, 2024, Encaustic on panel

Bottom right: *Harlequin (prod)*, 2024, Encaustic on panel

I can't imagine wearing this jockstrap!

I can't imagine seeing one in the wild. I would be like, "What an ally!" [Laughs]

An unhinged ally. It's a slightly unhinged behaviour.

I mean, some people are just real philanthropists... [Laughs]

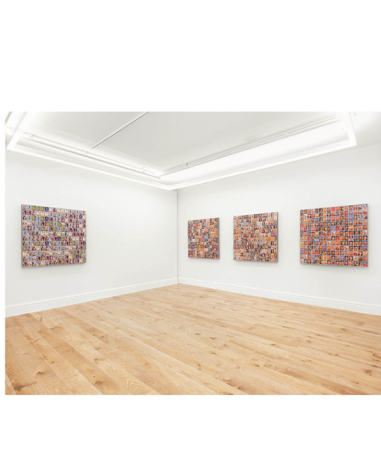
Sonnet by Mitchell Anderson is on view until April 17th at the Bernheim Gallery in London.



Left: *A Song About Myself*, 2024, Playing cards and dispersion on panel

Right top: *Remembrance piece*, 2024, Portable commemorative funerary flag display, packaging as shipped

Right bottom: *Baby blue piece*, 2023, Olympic Circumcised™ infant immobilizer, packaging as shipped



Exhibition view at Bernheim, London

Interview by Martin Onufrowicz

All pictures Courtesy of the Artist and Bernheim London/Zurich