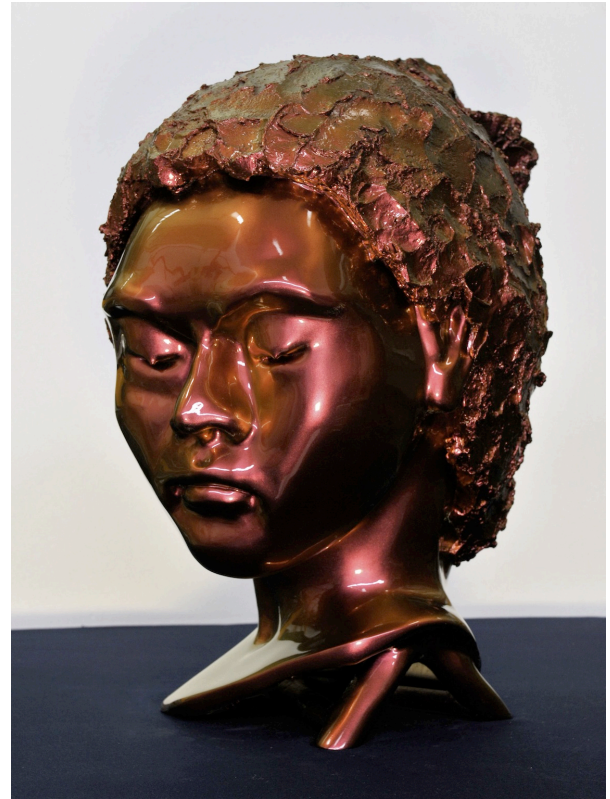


# FONDATION BEYELER

## Thomas Schütte

October 6, 2013 – February 2, 2014



Thomas Schütte, *Walser's Wife*, 2011  
Lacquer on aluminum, 65 x 38 x 54 cm  
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(Riehen, Switzerland, September 30, 2013) - Fondation Beyeler presents *Thomas Schütte* on view October 6, 2013- February 2, 2014. This exhibition of Thomas Schütte's work was arranged in close collaboration with the artist and presents a wide range of sculptures, drawings and watercolors that provide deep insight into Schütte's figurative work. Monumental women of steel, great spirits of bronze, caricatural figurines of modelling clay, lifesize heads and figures of ceramic, delicate watercolor portraits, and self-portraits drawn in front of the shaving mirror will all be on display reflecting Schütte's radical love of experiment and resistance of categorization. Bringing together works from the past thirty years, the show includes indoor and outdoor sculptures, works that have not been seen in public for many years, and others that are brand new.

With his small and large sculptures in bronze, steel, ceramic and glass, Schütte takes up the age-old tradition of figurative sculpture and proceeds to develop heads and figures that assert their irrevocable place in the present, both in their immediacy and their manufacture. At the entrance of the museum stands a group of *Die Fremden*, which as early as 1992 reflected the effectiveness and versatility of Schütte's handling of the human figure. Introspective, eyes lowered, and equipped with suitcases and traveling bags, the ceramic figures challenge wind and weather. Are they arriving or departing? Are they visitors, refugees, or just people traveling through?

His figure series, such as the *United Enemies*, has been part of the artist's oeuvre for decades. The 1994 figures, modeled of Fimo, a brand of plasticine, and later tied together, make the viewer

feel like giants with their astonishingly doll-like, arts-and-crafts appearance. Twenty years later, the just under four-meter-tall double sculptures of patinated bronze relegate the viewer to miniatures. After facing a strange yet familiar figurine, viewers gaze upwards at a monumental bronze sculpture of enigmatic origin. Such shifts in scale are a typical example of Schütte's method. Schütte's sculptures enter the scene as on a stage; rather than being autonomous and self-contained, they always relate to their surroundings and the audience.

For years, this masterful play of monumentality and intimacy has been conducted in the public space, where Schütte's figures are visible to all, whether native, tourist or passerby. His outdoor sculptures, whether the *United Enemies* at the entrance to New York's Central Park or *Vater Staat* (Father State) outside the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, seem naturally integrated in the everyday life of the city. This was especially evident this summer in the case of the sculpture group *Vier Grosse Geister* (Four Big Spirits), occupying at three sites in Zurich, Geneva and Bern. It was this year's example of the continuation of a Fondation Beyeler tradition of presenting art to a wide audience in the public realm.

With his small and large-scale sculptures in bronze, steel, aluminum, ceramic, glass, wood and wax, Thomas Schütte continues the long tradition of figurative sculpture that was called profoundly into question in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, developing figures whose immediacy of appeal and technique make them absolutely of the present day.

There is a strong connection between Schütte's art and the Fondation Beyeler, the museum's collection notably represents the modern image of man, with artists like Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Alberto Giacometti, and Francis Bacon. Schütte is an artist who, a few generations later, is again tracing the nature of being human in figures and heads made under quite different circumstances.

The project in public space *Vier Grosse Geister* was made possible with the support of JTI, of Simone and Peter Forcart-Staehelin; of the Georg und Bertha Schwyzer-Winiker Stiftung.

The German-language catalogue to accompany the exhibition, *Thomas Schütte. Figur*, is published by Walther König Verlag. It contains an essay by Adrian Searle, interviews with the artist by Theodora Vischer and a conversation among Gerhard Richter, Schütte and Vischer. 193 pages, 250 color illustrations, price: 59 CHF, available at the museum (ISBN 978-3-906053-11-0).

### **About Thomas Schütte**

Active in Düsseldorf, the German sculptor and draftsman Thomas Schütte (b. 1954) is among most fascinating and innovative artists of his generation. He studied from 1973 to 1981 at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, first in the class of Fritz Schwegler, then with Gerhard Richter. At that period, Düsseldorf, Cologne and the Rhineland were the most vital art center in Europe, where, for instance, the avant-garde of American Minimal and Conceptual Art had a greater presence than anywhere else on the Continent. One focus of this activity was the gallery run by Konrad Fischer, where the young, as-yet unknown Thomas Schütte had his first one-man show, in 1981.

It was the beginning of a continually developing, astonishing career. In the early 1980s, Schütte became known for his architectural-looking models and objects, shown at exhibitions yet seldom translated into actual structures. One exception was *Eis* (Ice), a sort of ice cream parlor that was much frequented at the 1987 "Documenta 8".

Simultaneously with this conceptual work, Schütte had begun to develop a figurative oeuvre, at the onset of which stood tiny figures and heads formed and assembled of various materials. Apparently, however, the time was not yet ripe for this brand of art – until 1992, when the polychrome ceramic figures of *Die Fremden* (The Strangers) found great acclaim during "Documenta IX" in Kassel. alongside his model-like constructions, Schütte had begun to develop a sculptural oeuvre centered around the human figure. At the time, this was an unexpected theme, and it took on more and more importance for the artist. In time, an impressive figurative oeuvre emerged, whose radicality and innovative traits seemed hardly imaginable any more in this field.

Since then Schütte has logically and successfully pursued his work in both areas. Presenting himself on the one hand as a builder of utopian and actual architectural models, on the other he shows new groups of figures and heads. The two activities are linked by drawings, which trace a recognizable path through the artist's entire oeuvre.

**Press images:** available from <http://pressimages.fondationbeyeler.ch>

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**Fondation Beyeler opening hours: 10 am - 6 pm daily, Wednesdays until 8 pm**