

Thomas Schütte

April 28 – June 21, 2007

The Nelson-Freeman Gallery is glad to show a new exhibition by Thomas Schütte, a German artist with whom it has worked for the past 25 years. Thomas Schütte was awarded the Gold Lion (a prize rewarding the Best Artist) at the 2005 Venice Biennale. He is on the art scene a major figure of his generation, working along three different lines, i.e. human figures, architectural models and works on paper. The ceaseless renewal of his interests imparts his works original, idiosyncratic qualities, as featured for instance in his "Capacity Men", which were on show at the 2006 Berlin Biennale. The latter work belongs to a three-piece series, exhibited in his personal exhibition *Political Works*, on show at the 2005 Porto Serralves Museum. A 2006 retrospective exhibition of his drawings was shown successively at the Baden-Baden Staatliche Kunsthalle (Germany), the Tilburg De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art (Netherlands) and the Nurnberg Neues Museum (Germany). "Hotel for the Birds", Trafalgar Square, London is a sculptural project to be inaugurated this year. From September onward, an exhibition of his early works is expected to take place at the Henry Moore Institute.

In to day's exhibition at the Nelson-Freeman Gallery, the first floor is devoted to an entirely new sculpture by Thomas Schütte : it is made up of anatomical parts of his "Grosse Geister" (Great Spirits), all piled up on top of one another. These large humanoid figures, the unfinished shape of which is apparently still in process, seem to undergo a new metamorphosis, this time evoking decay. However, this is not the first time that anatomical parts of "Grosse Geister" are used individually: a single torso was already shown for its own sake as a sculpture in 2005. Along this anatomical exploration of the human figure, Schütte also shows the last female nude of a series of eighteen, all presented on a table as pedestal. Inspired by the traditional, academic sculptures of female nudes, from Maillol, Henry Moore and Matisse, among others, Schütte expresses here his own personal vision, referring in a playful manner to the former masters. The common pedestals of all his nudes are steel tables, of similar sizes, simultaneously serving as frames, upon which the female figures are either distorted, flattened, over-extending and protruding, or erect ... A print portfolio shows the preliminary work of the complete series, enabling one to visualize the integral work devoted to the female body.

Thomas Schütte's interest in architecture is ever increasing. It is exemplified here, on show below the glass roof, by a new model representing a construction entitled "House for a Widow", which belongs to the "One Man Houses" series.

On the second floor, a real-sized fire place, drawn by the artist, is to be seen after the pieces of furniture he realized during the past few years for his "One Man Houses", the preliminary step of a real sized architectural project. As customary with him, Schütte enjoys interweaving different scales. The artist shows here, for the first time, shelved on the walls, the complete series of "Wichte", i.e. twelve small bronze heads highlighted by a bright-colored patina, generally grimacing, often grotesque. Schütte's interest in figuration and taste for caricature are present here again. The definitely evoke the fimo paste figures featuring his "United Enemies".

The work of Thomas Schütte takes multiple, various forms: sculptures, drawings, architectural models and installations. His intellectual vista evolves from such standard notions as nature, politics or the cultural background of his time, integrating wider themes such as the artist's condition and his relationship with society. But whatever their serious thematic may be, his works are almost never devoid of irony and criticism.