



“From Figuration” at Skarstedt Gallery Through March 23rd, 2013

By D. Creahan

Currently on view at Skarstedt Gallery's London location is a compelling exploration of figurative sculpture, titled From Figuration. Welcoming a host of high-profile names, including George Condo, Thomas Schütte, Jonathan Meese, Rosemarie Trockel, Rebecca Warren, and Paul McCarthy, the exhibition seeks to capture a broad range of approaches and themes expressed by this particular niche in the field of sculpture.

Featuring a small but tightly-curated selection of eight pieces, From Figuration seeks a return to emphasis on the form, focusing the depicted body as the communicative element of the work. Through this lens, each artist recreates the human (or, in some cases, animal) body as a vehicle for their own thematic and artistic explorations and motives, allowing new dialogue between the artist's unique voice and the relatively standard format they work through.

Notable throughout the works is an ongoing exploration of the form itself, twisting position and emphasis to create new meanings and interactions between the work and viewer. In Rosemarie Trockel's *Gewohnheitstier 2 (Reh)* (Creature of Habit 2 Deer), the artist allows a new vantage point on a typically fleeting animal. Allowing a certain uncertainty about the animal's state of being (it could either be dead or sleeping), the work offers a muddle reading that the viewer can interpret as they see fit. In George Condo's, *Totemic Personage*, the human form is taken to its extremes, warped almost beyond recognition, positioning the human form as a vessel for interpretation and the making of meaning.

The notion of the form as totemic, as a location of spiritual power and significance runs through a number of works on view. Also of note is Paul McCarthy's *Picabia Idol*, which extends a link through art history, blending homage and signification with distinctly original approaches to re-evaluating both artists' work. Adapting a fictitious sculpture from a painting by Francis Picabia, McCarthy introduces his idol into the three-dimensional world, changing its relations and implications as it comes closer to its implied form as a spiritual object.

Concurrently, Juan Muñoz's *Krefeld Dwarf* subverts this sense of spiritual potency in favor of a wholly flawed, human perspective. His sculpture seems to peer wistfully out of the gallery window, inviting a creation of narrative through its interaction with its surrounding space. The impression becomes one of sadness and desire, peering out from the limitations of the human form.

Diverse yet concentrated, the current show at Skarstedt pulls from the last 20 years of sculptural figuration to present a line of works that act in turn as theoretical, thematic and temporal points in the progression of sculpture.

The show is on view until March 23rd.