

MUSEUM 52

JOHN ISAACS

A PERFECT SOUL

Preview 20 September 2007 6 - 8 pm

20 September – 19 October 2007

Wednesday - Saturday 11am – 6pm

We have the sky to talk about and the world to lie upon

Townes Van Zandt, Rain on a Conga Drum

Romanticism represents a crisis, “a shift in consciousness” that “cracked the backbone of European thought”. Essentially, the broken backbone was the long-standing belief in the power of human reason to govern all actions and solve all problems. Among the Romantics, there was on the one hand a rebellion against restrictions of all kinds, and on the other the search for a new point of certainty. Within this definitive purpose subjectivity triumphed over the abandoned validity of objective ideals. What kind of a world could then be constructed within this labyrinth of different perspectives, this hall of mirror’s reflecting broken images of the self? This is now the very landscape in which we live, in which we strive to build upon the unsteady foundations of our own internal utopia in the long shadows of our predecessors.

For Isaacs’ exhibition he has created two different environments that interact as a complete, singular exhibit. The first room presents a solid block of building materials: lumps of stone, steel, bricks and mortar configured into the minimal language of the cube: a dense meteorite like mass of material filling the space. The surface of the structure becomes at points confused: incongruous materials appear amongst the congruous, decentering the objectivity of the moment and turning it into a more multifaceted, disrupted experience. Isaacs utilises the traditional Romantic image of a ruined building not just as an historical trace, but also as an embodiment of the consistency of human endeavour. As in the works of artists such as Caspar David Friedrich, it is possible to view this tomb like structure as representing a sense of loss, both historical entropy and that of the self. This sense of perpetual loss and disembodiment is further articulated in the rear space where the form of a broken geometric shape, resembling a diamond, is positioned. The piece, made from steel (akin to that used in window frames) and glass, is accompanied by a video projection of changing fields of colour.

A Perfect Soul, as in much of Isaacs’ work, looks deep into human experience in order to mirror some of the multifaceted emotions we feel. For Isaacs the visual language of the object is also articulated by the metaphorical content of it’s material quality. The block or geometric form, tragically inert, broken and dilapidated, can be seen in the genre of portraiture: steel, bricks and glass, metamorphose into sinews, bones and flesh.

John Isaacs has exhibited extensively on an international level, exhibitions include: Spectacular Bodies, **The Hayward Gallery, London**, 2000; Disasters of War, **KW, Berlin**, 2000; Minimal Maximal, **Museum of Modern Art Kyoto**, 2001; Mike Kelley’s The Uncanny, **Tate Liverpool**, 2004; Les Grande Spectacle, **Museum der Moderne, Salzburg**, 2004; In the Darkest Hour There May Be Light, **The Serpentine Gallery**, London, 2007. Rockers Island The Olbricht Collection, **Museum Folkwang Essen**, 2007.

Museum 52 is delighted to welcome George Henry Longly as this exhibition’s sign artist.

For more information please contact Melissa Emery.