

PRESS KIT

JOHN ISAACS

TRAVESIA CUATRO

‘I Use Sculpture as a Kind of Wheelbarrow of Meaning’: British Artist John Isaacs on His More-Is-More Approach to Sculpture

"This is the Place" at ArtVera's in Geneva brings together an eclectic selection of works made by the artist over the past 20 years.

Artnet Gallery Network, January 30, 2020



Installation view "This is the Place," 2020. Courtesy of Artvera's.

Consider it an exhibition decades in the making.

British artist John Isaacs first rose up in London among the Young British Artists of the 1990s and, in the years since, has cultivated a dynamic practice that draws on science and poetry, taps into motifs both ancient and contemporary, and crosses mediums with abandon. Perhaps his most recognizable works are his sculptures of distorted bodies and body parts that border on the grotesque. Now, the artist's first solo show in Geneva—"This is the Place" at Artvera's gallery—is pulling together an eclectic cross-section of the artist's output over the past 20 years.

Recently, we caught up with Isaacs, who shared his thoughts on our culture's obsession with beauty, the transformation of his work over the years, and how to hold out hope in our current climate of doom.



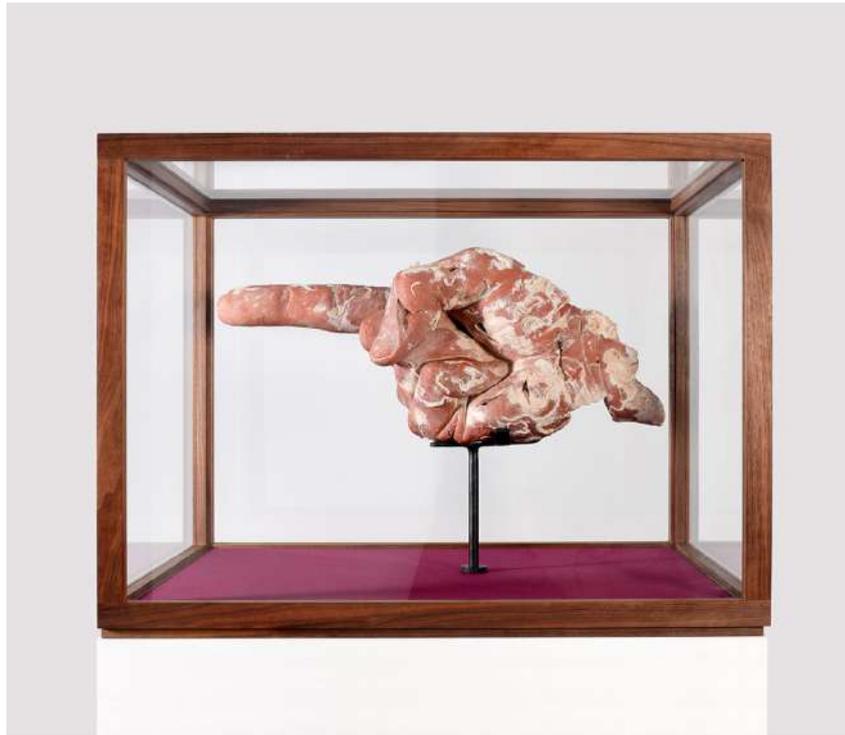
John Isaacs, *Untitled* (2019). Courtesy of the artist.

The works on view in this exhibition date from 2003 to 2019. How were the works chosen and do you think they show the arc of your career?

The idea was not to make a retrospective... the idea was to make the most comprehensive and interesting exhibition from what was available to us, for a public that probably knew very little of my working practice. Artvera's is purposely not the typical white space type gallery so I had to take that factor in mind as well, when constructing the show. We wanted to present a selection of works, that reflected the recurring ideas and intentions (one might even say obsessions) that inhabit most of the objects I create.

How do you see your more recent works in relation to your works from the early 2000s?

I don't think my intentions have changed. I have always been interested in exploring the space between the poetics of meaning and the realities of material. I make all kinds of objects and use all kinds of materials because I find that personally interesting, in that it creates a larger visual and physical landscape. For many, the artistic intention is to purify a sentiment, but I always felt this to be a myth, an absurdity, to trust in some empirical "truth." My feeling has always been to take something simple and load it with everything possible. I use sculpture as a kind of wheelbarrow of meaning, capable of taking on all of its surroundings, and, alternately, to be crushed by its environment. However, I have to say, my more recent works are less directed towards one specific meaning than the earlier works. I feel the need to work more intuitively now. The question has shifted from what to why.



John Isaacs, *The Cyclical Development of Stasis* (2015). Courtesy of the artist.

Your works often incorporate elements of the body, but the figures are distorted, fragmented, and often grotesque. What do you feel you can express through the imagery of the body?

All art, all architecture, all fashion is about the body. All human activity is measured by the body. The body doesn't need to be represented to be present—the physical border between self and the other is the visible surface, but this is simply a geographical point, as we are not defined solely by matter, but by emotions, and, one would hope, by empathy. The fragmented elements of my work are a visual reminder of the incomplete—broken, fragmented bodies are more a reflection of self than the complete body and, thus, a better mirror. Of course, these aspects of my work are often what people focus on, as though I make “monsters,” and I am well aware that society itself is currently in love with the beauty of aesthetics, but in the end all we are really looking for in art, in life, is a place for our self, our selves, a home. I'm more interested in finding the missing pieces of our identity which are felt to be there, but not yet present.

Your titles are often poetic, elusive. How do you see these titles in relationship to the works themselves—or, in other words, what is their intention?

If something appears to be a very specific thing, then it might remain locked in this identity. Titles are a way to free the work from its form and bring it into another plane of existence. For me, a title is the opposite of a definition and should place the mind in a conflict with the eye. The specifics of the actual object or the title in itself isn't as important to me as the way in which they can be released into another context. The titles are there to remind the viewer of the philosophical value of the artwork, to guide his reflection or, on the contrary, contradict it. The very opposite of sticking a needle through a butterfly and pinning it to a board.



John Isaacs, *The Architecture of Empathy* (2019). Courtesy of the artist.

The gallery describes your work as a mix of “seductive optimism and abject pessimism.” Can you speak to that?

Well maybe that’s just a reflection of the world at large, right? I mean, look at the current daily diet of [Greta] Thunberg and [Donald] Trump. I’m just a product of the fucked up world that we live in, dreaming of a pristine wilderness while being given every technological chance to watch it vanish. We are all witness now to epic images of apocalypse from raging fires, swarms of locusts, and now, the new plague, not to mention all the usual daily shit going on from human conflicts, vested interests, natural habitats under threat, new continents built of plastic, the list does actually go on and on.

We can all agree that there is a lot to be pessimistic about when you look at the overall greed and bullshit perpetrated on a daily basis by humankind, a lot to leave one feeling powerless and desperate—in fact, it’s safe to say that the “seductive optimism” aspect is really shaking in the shadows of all this darkness these days, but one must never let go of hope.

I do have children, I do want to see a future, and part of that is to shine a light from a good place into the dark. The real “beauty” in art, it’s real role is to seduce people back from the zombie sleep of daily life, to remind people of where they are and what they are surrounded by, where they come from and what they could be, to be re-sensitized to the human race.

See images of “John Isaacs: This is the Place” below.



Installation view of "This is the Place," 2019. Courtesy of Artvera's.



John Isaacs, *Things That Can Be Are That Which We Know* (2011) // John Isaacs, *Untitled* (2018).
Courtesy of the artist.



John Isaacs, *This is the Place* (2016). Courtesy of the artist.

Il corpo tra arte e scienza. La mostra Sublimi Anatomie al Palazzo delle Esposizioni di Roma

By **Redazione** -13 dicembre 2019

TRA LE MOSTRE DA NON PERDERE DURANTE LE FESTE NATALIZIE C'È SUBLIMI ANATOMIE, PRESSO PALAZZO DELLE ESPOSIZIONI A ROMA, CHE RACCONTA IL TEMA DEL CORPO INCROCIANDO ARTE E SCIENZA. ECCO LE IMMAGINI



Sublimi Anatomie , Palazzo delle Esposizioni Roma. Photo Monkeys Video Lab

È in corso fino al 6 gennaio 2020 la mostra *Sublimi Anatomie*, a cura di Andrea Carlino, Philippe Comar, Anna Luppi, Vincenzo Napolano e Laura Perrone presso Palazzo delle Esposizioni a Roma: sei sale che raccontano in maniera articolata la bellezza del corpo umano nelle sue implicazioni estetiche e scientifiche, attraversando le epoche della storia. Tanti gli artisti coinvolti, – **Berlinde De Bruyckere, Birgit Jürgenssen, Chen Zhen, Dany Danino, Dennis Oppenheim, Diego Perrone, Ed Atkins, Gary Hill, Gastone Novelli, Giuseppe Penone, Heidi Bucher, John Isaacs, Ketty La Rocca, Luca Francesconi, Marc Quinn, Marisa Merz, Michaël Borremans, Pino Pascali, Sissi, Yvonne Rainer** –, le cui opere vanno a incrociarsi con le scoperte tecniche e scientifiche, gli strumenti e i numerosi documenti che analizzano l'evoluzione di un tema che non è solo medico, ma anche sociale, estetico, politico. Politico come può essere il corpo, maschile o femminile che sia, protagonista dei nostri cambi di traiettoria nella costruzione della percezione dell'altro, nelle strategie che adotta il nostro sguardo. Tante le prospettive che attraversano la storia del corpo e che la mostra, coinvolgendo tutti i sensi, mette insieme cooperando attivamente con l'INFN Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare e il Polo Museale della Sapienza Università di Roma. Completano il percorso espositivo tre cere anatomiche della collezione La Specola, appartenenti al Museo di Storia Naturale di Firenze, di provenienza settecentesca e recentemente restaurate. Non manca un public program, che sta trasformando gli spazi di Palazzo delle Esposizioni in un vero e proprio "Teatro Anatomico", con dibattiti, azioni, performance. Tra queste, quella già raccontatavi da *Artribune* con [protagonista Sissi](#), o una conferenza di Giuseppe Penone. Prossimi appuntamenti con la performance *Olympia* dell'artista russa, di stanza a Berlino, **Rachel Monosov** e il 4 gennaio con l'azione del canadese, nato a Nairobi, **Brendan Fernandes**, per la prima volta in Italia. Ecco le immagini.

La rivelazione del sublime nel corpo umano. Una mostra al Palazzo delle Esposizioni di Roma

di **Redazione** , scritto il 20/10/2019, 13:08:02

Categorie: **Mostre**

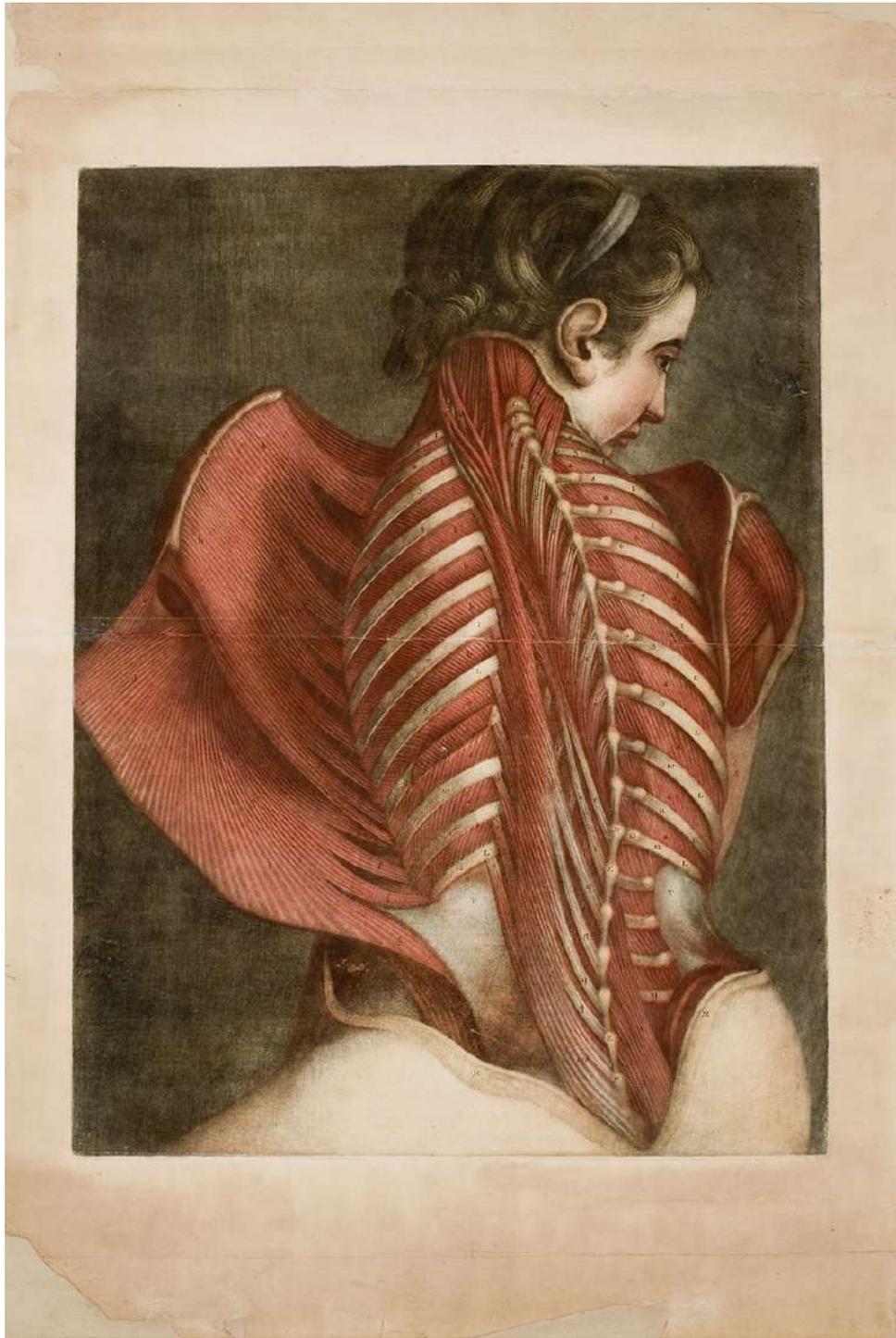
Sublimi Anatomie è una mostra collettiva di arte contemporanea e arte del Novecento sulla **rivelazione del sublime nel corpo umano**, tra passato e presente e all'incrocio tra pratiche artistiche e imprese scientifiche. Una storia secolare e spettacolare dell'osservazione del corpo che coinvolge in primo luogo i sensi (innanzitutto la vista e il tatto), ma anche strumenti e tecnologie. **Palazzo delle Esposizioni a Roma** ospiterà, dal 22 ottobre 2019 al 6 gennaio 2020, opere, manufatti e documenti di straordinaria importanza storica che, tra arte e scienza, raccontano l'evoluzione dell'anatomia umana in dialogo serrato con la ricerca artistica contemporanea sulla materialità del corpo.

Partendo dalla suggestione del teatro anatomico, la rotonda di Palazzo delle Esposizioni si trasformerà in uno spazio dedicato al dibattito sulla visione e la costruzione dell'immagine del corpo, ma anche in un atelier di disegno dal vero e in una vera e propria scena per la performance. Sostituendo i modelli viventi ai cadaveri, questo dispositivo diventerà, per tutta la durata della mostra, uno strumento destinato a suscitare dinamiche di attivazione dell'occhio, della mano e del corpo.

La *mise en abîme* del teatro anatomico, dunque, non intende solo restituire centralità al corpo sensibile ma propone di rovesciare le relazioni che, all'interno dello spazio espositivo, si stabiliscono fra l'osservato e l'osservatore.

Le sei sale che dal teatro s'irradiano, restituiranno la storia del corpo osservato nelle arti e nelle scienze con una selezione di oggetti e documenti di grande valore storico-scientifico e storico-artistico come i preziosi manichini anatomici ottocenteschi realizzati in cartapesta da **Louis Thomas Jerome Auzoux**, le tavole anatomiche stampate in quadricromia da **Jacques-Fabien Gautier-Dagoty** o le ceroplastiche di **Filippo Pacini**. Il percorso incrocerà la storia dell'anatomia con la ricerca artistica contemporanea, esibendo opere di artisti come **Berlinde De Bruyckere**, **Birgit Jürgenssen**, **Chen Zhen**, **Dany Danino**, **Dennis Oppenheim**, **Diego Perrone**, **Ed Atkins**, **Gary Hill**, **Gastone Novelli**, **Giuseppe Penone**, **Heidi Bucher**, **John Isaacs**, **Ketty La Rocca**, **Luca Francesconi**, **Marc Quinn**, **Marisa Merz**, **Michaël Borremans**, **Pino Pascali**, **Sissi**, **Yvonne Rainer**.

Per tutte le informazioni potete visitare il **sito ufficiale** del Palazzo delle Esposizioni.



Femme vue de dos, disséquée de la nuque au sacrum, dite l'Ange anatomique. Planche non reliée, provenant de Jacques Fabien Gautier d'Agoty, "Mytologie complète en couleur et grandeur naturelle", Paris, 1746. Bibliothèque Inter-Universitaire Santé Médecine, Parigi



John Isaacs, *Sleepwalking into the Anthropocene*, 2019, clay, steel, epoxy resin, paper, 27 1/2 × 32 1/4 × 14 1/8".

John Isaacs

TRAVESÍA CUATRO | MADRID

A colorful colossus, vaguely anthropomorphic and covered in rags, guards the gallery entrance, setting an ambivalent tone for the carefully orchestrated choreography of John Isaacs's exhibition "Dust." All but one of the works on view have been shipped from the British artist's Berlin studio—literally hot from the oven in the case of some ceramics. Isaacs has carefully arranged them to suggest a loose narrative, with an almost rakish progress from the most open spaces, visible from the street, toward the private, recondite inner rooms.

Totem or taboo? The piece is titled *The Architecture of Empathy*, 2019, and looks both welcoming and vaguely threatening: It is difficult to decide whether it stands as a hopeful milestone or as a warning. It could be an artifact of a future festive civilization, or the ruin of an earlier one already wiped from the face of the Earth. Isaacs himself commented on its ambiguity while talking about the show: He originally wanted to make it so that it could wobble, like a giant tumbler doll. A certain blend of irrationality, emotion, and lucid ingenuity would be useful tools to approach such works, just as with the larger world we create and inhabit, and to which they allude.

Utopian and dystopian connotations similarly accompany one another in *Sleepwalking into the Anthropocene*, 2019, with its reproduction of Brancusi's *Sleeping Muse* as if it were a deflated balloon, set on a classical pedestal bearing the inscription THIS IS THE PLACE. The pedestal is cracked, and little pieces of paper bearing the wishes and secrets of visitors are embedded in its crevices.

Open Letter, 2019, is a tapestry that reproduces and enlarges the clumsy handwriting of a child's homework—that of the artist's daughter. Along with the question CAN YOU REMEMBER THE ANIMALS?, its list of animals and other terms that might be vocabulary words has an elegiac air, which is accentuated by its confrontation here with the sculpture *Untitled*, 2019: the glazed-ceramic body of a mutilated woman of generous shape, her skin painted with a blue-and-brown world map, as if she were a globe. Indeed, all three works in this room function in concert as a moving, richly interwoven installation that spans from the most cherished intimacy to global concerns: Both of the aforementioned pieces are reflected in the large wall-mounted mirror of *Study for an Emotional Landscape*, 2019, which frames them, and imprisons them—given that it is chained to a heavy Murano-glass balloon on the floor. The gallery as a whole evokes the disturbing aftermath of a battle that is perhaps yet to come.

Isaacs has shown an irreverent and refreshing eclecticism throughout his career. Here, it takes on a different tone as he jumps over traditional barriers and borders, both artistic and political, again mixing together different techniques, formats, and idioms—photography, neon, sculpture, painting—with ironic and tongue-in-cheek quotations and allusions to titans of modern art such as Brancusi, Picasso, and Michelangelo Pistoletto. Taken altogether, the exhibition encourages an emotional and empathic vision of an alternative world. In one small piece, *Untitled*, 2018, colorful neon letters offer a kind of utopian manifesto: VOTES FOR CHILDREN, they demand. Perhaps not as foolish as the daily world we inhabit, the phrase sums up the mixed mood of Isaacs's recent work, which hovers between melancholy and his old rebellious self. Perhaps, it implies, we'd be better off with a little less common sense and a little more imagination.

— *Javier Montes*

John Isaacs “ARCHIPELAGO from a distance you look smaller but I know that you are there” at Galleria Poggiali, Milan

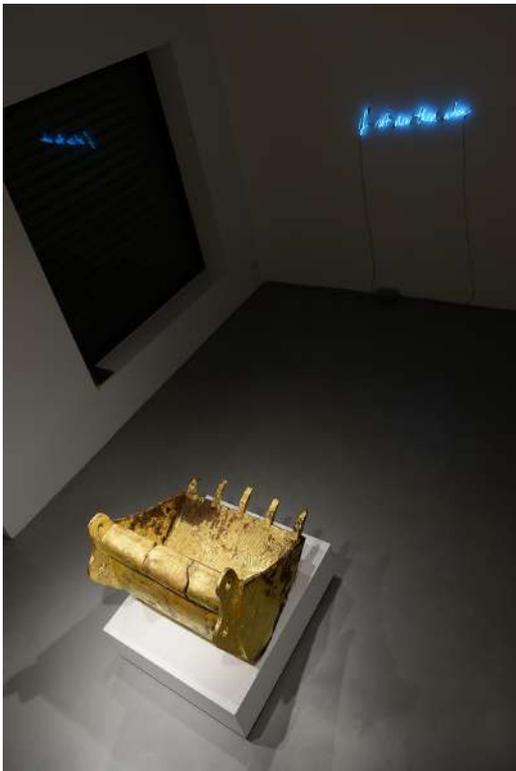


The Galleria Poggiali is delighted to present “ARCHIPELAGO – from a distance you look smaller but I know that you are there” by John Isaacs, the first solo show of the English artist in the gallery’s Milan premises. The opening of the exhibition, curated by Pierre Yves Desaive, coincides with Art Week and miart 2018, the twenty-third edition of the modern and contemporary art fair, and will run up to 29 June 2018. For his Milan solo show the artist is presenting a single project consisting of three elements created for the occasion – a sculpture, a neon light and a photograph – each a reflection on the subject of time, its sacredness and its perception.

John Isaacs, a multifaceted artist with a career of over twenty years behind him, began in England as one of the Young British Artists (YBA). In 2005 he moved to Berlin, where he continues to live and work; here his poetics has evolved, becoming increasingly more eclectic and less tied to the British style. In his work he has used a variety of media, from painting to sculpture and photography. He has also employed a range of materials including bronze, neon light, wax and ceramic. This constant shifting of language is closely bound up with his research on the nature of man, on paradox, on the difficulties of contemporary life and the social pressures generated by economics.



The curator of the show, Pierre Yves Desaiwe, underscores how ARCHIPELAGO revolves around the apparently utopic need to conciliate the demands of the individual with the crushing burden of all humanity, alluding to the historic but precarious interconnections of all our lives.



Isaacs' work generates altered modes of perceiving history: approaching materials that declare their time, the artist transforms past and novelty into ambiguous categories and, through his works, ponders the symbolism of religious institutions and popular culture to re-establish parameters of value and meaning.

The empty temple (2018) is a sculpture made from ceramic, shellac, epoxy resin and 23 carat gold leaf in the form of a life-size excavator blade. This is an apparently solid work but is actually made from fragile ceramic. It appears in the shape of progress and reflects our present, while at the same time representing the beliefs of the past and recalling a relic more than a piece of construction equipment, almost a cult object resurfacing from remote times.

From a distance you look smaller but I know that you are there (2018) is a legend written in neon, a luminous note handwritten on the wall which, consistently with Isaacs' typical attitude, sets the categories of past, present and future on a collision course. It is a graffito in light in which the reference to artists such as Merz and Nauman is intrinsic, and the apparently direct message is in fact once again open. Like a memo, the work indeed has the capacity to make us alter our point of view, reminding us of the infinite possibilities of change.

The third work on show, a perfect soul (2018), is a photograph of the artist's wife and daughter, an immediate reference to the narrative of the family, of love, of the myth of life cycles and the memory of one generation that influences another. It is an intimate image with a strong emotional charge that anyone can relate to, but the order is inverted and it is the child who is embracing her mother rather than the opposite. Once again Isaacs poses a question about our linear notion of time, urging a return to belief in magic and lightness. He proposes an emotional flow moving in several directions at once, so that we can model our future on a past normally not perceived.



The initial alienation triggered by the works of this artist concerns an essence shared by all human beings, a sensation that is sublimated by the great diversity of means and materials that can capture the imagination of the observer. Language and references aim to open up to new dialogues so that, rather than the meaning being confirmed, it is instead eliminated to reveal the emotional dimension of things and their relation with the human being.

John Isaacs "ARCHIPELAGO from a distance you look smaller but I know that you are there" at Galleria Poggiali, Milan, 2018
Photos: Michele Sereni. Courtesy: Galleria Poggiali, Milan

DIARY

OH MILANO!

May 07, 2018 • Milan • Michela Moro on the 2018 edition of MiArt and Milan Art Week

ART FAIRS MIGHT BE A BIT like that moment before death, when your entire life flashes before your eyes. During a span of only days, everyone seems to bump into everyone they've ever known since, well, forever. Certainly, this was the case at the Milan Art Fair, or MiArt, which opened on April 13 and ran through April 15. Despite the bad weather, I was out and about on a Monday, several days before the fair's official opening, to honor the artist Jimmie Durham. He is a beloved presence at the Fondazione Adolfo Pini, a refurbished nineteenth-century apartment building, where his current exhibition, "Labyrinth," curated by Gabi Scardi, is staged. Throngs of people showed up to pay their respects to the master. At the same time, there was a ceremony for the artist R  di Martino, as she was awarded the 2018 Acacia Prize—but I was already at the dinner preview for "*Una Tempesta Dal Paradiso: Arte Contemporanea del Medio Oriente e Nord Africa*" (But a Storm Is Blowing from Paradise: Contemporary Art of the Middle East and North Africa), presented by Milan's Galleria d'Arte Moderna (or GAM), New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and UBS. Giuseppe Sala, Milan's mayor, opened the show—an inaugural gesture for this year's edition of the city-wide Milan Art Week, of which MiArt is the core.

At the palace Villa Reale, a large outdoor tent was set up to accommodate hordes of cultural powerhouses, such as Richard Armstrong, the director of the Guggenheim in New York; Fabio Innocenzi, the chief executive officer of Italian wealth management at UBS; and Paola Zatti, GAM's head curator. Giovanna Forlanelli Rovati and her husband, Lucio Rovati, were there. Next year they are opening a Mario Cucinella–designed museum in the center of the city to exhibit their vast collection of antiquities, many of which are Etruscan. Other guests included Peggy Guggenheim's granddaughter Karole P. B. Vail, the director of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection; Rosario Bifulco and his lovely wife, Anna Maria Voiello (Bifulco is the chairman of the auction house Finarte); and Rosa Giovanna Magnifico Panza di Biumo, the widow of visionary collector Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, and their daughter, Giuseppina Caccia Dominioni. The cordial and attentive Alessandro Rabottini, MiArt's director, was present and chatting with everyone. The artists in attendance were timid. The bankers, however, were enthusiastic about the art—if sometimes a little perplexed.



Artist John Isaacs.

The galleries held their openings on Tuesday, April 10. Obviously, it was impossible to see all of them, so I visited the spaces that led to my final destination for the evening. Galleria Poggiali presented John Isaacs's show "Archipelago—from a distance you look smaller but I know that you are there." Isaacs was in attendance, smiling and looking very cool. The gallery Viasaterna featured art by octogenarian Marion Baruch and thirtysomething Alessandro Teoldi. At the reception, the gallery served wines produced by Giorgio Rossi Cairo, the husband of the extremely hospitable dealer Irene Crocco. Kaufmann Repetto had a show up by activist and artist Andrea Bowers. Lots of beer and young people came to Gio Marconi, which hosted Magnus Andersson's colorful exhibition, "*Danzanti Militanti*" (Militant Dancers). Paola Clerico's traveling project, *Case Chiuse #06, Tamara Henderson attorno Carla Accardi* (Closed Houses #06 Tamara Henderson Around Carla Accardi), 2018, was installed in a laboratory on the outskirts of the city. All of these spaces dotted the path that led to Pirelli HangarBicocca, a contemporary art museum housed in a former industrial plant. When people finally got there, they were left speechless by the sumptuous installation of "Matt Mullican: The Feeling of Things," the artist's first Italian retrospective and his largest exhibition of works to date, curated by Roberta Tenconi. About one hundred international guests and friends of the artist participated in the lively post-opening dinner. The crowd included the museum's artistic director, Vicente Todolí; collectors Rudy Hodel and the Girardis (Claudio and Giuseppina); dealers Victor Gisler, Peter Freeman, Anthony Reynolds, and Amanda Wilkinson; curators and art historians Germano Celant and Achille Bonito Oliva; and the artists Julião Sarmento (who came in straight from Lisbon) and Maurizio Cattelan. Sarah Cosulich, the Rome Quadriennale's new director, and collector Marco Rossi also came to the dinner—he arrived from Turin. Art Basel's

global director Marc Spiegler and collector Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo were there as well.

The next day, during a massive downpour, everyone gathered at the FM Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea for "The Szechwan Tale: China, Theatre, and History," curated by Marco Scotini, who treated us to an in-depth tour of the show. Later, I raced off to the Triennale Teatro dell'Arte for the MiArt-commissioned *Prisma* (Prism), 2018, a performance by Alessandro Sciarroni and the art duo Nicolò Massazza and Iacopo Bedogni, better known as Masbedo.

On Thursday, only moments after MiArt's opening, everyone took stock of the fair and seemed to be in agreement that this year's edition was a success. In the best tradition of Milanese collecting and connoisseurship, it offered a skillfully curated selection of modern and contemporary works.

Just outside the fair, visitors watched happy children jumping on Jeremy Deller's tongue-in-cheek *Sacrilege*, 2012, an inflatable 1:1 version of Stonehenge, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, the artistic director of the New Museum in New York and the Fondazione Nicola Trussardi. Deller was present, a bit worn out by the installation. *Sacrilege*, brought to the fair courtesy of the Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, was erected in the CityLife sculpture park, one of the most contemporary urban areas in Milan, which also carries important architectural interventions by Arata Isozaki, Zaha Hadid, and Daniel Libeskind.

I then went to Fondazione Trussardi's dinner in honor of Deller, held at Libeskind's spacious loft. The foundation's president, Beatrice Trussardi, was there—a dazzling figure, always calm, always collected. Afterward, I dropped by Gagosian's dinner at the Six Gallery for Alberto Burri and Sterling Ruby, who were represented by Gagosian at the fair. At this late hour the rain came back, but it was mild, and it encouraged lively conversation. Rabottini made an appearance, as did Francesco Stocchi, the curator of "Sol LeWitt: Between the Lines" at the Fondazione Carriero. A trio of fabulous women who work on behalf of Gagosian—Pepi Marchetti Franchi, Serena Cattaneo, and Anna Gavazzi—were still in high spirits, despite it being a very long day.

MiArt opened to the public on a gorgeously temperate Friday. Early in the morning I headed out to a breakfast hosted by fashion maven Angela Missoni, who discovered the work of American artist Rachel Hayes on Instagram. To the artist's great astonishment, Angela asked her to collaborate with her company on a visual campaign, just in time for MiArt. The result was *Blowing in the Wind*, 2018, a site-specific installation for the Missoni showroom that was poetic, polychromatic, and hi-tech. As night approached, we received an invitation from the handbag manufacturer Furla—a company that's been supporting contemporary art for decades—to visit the fifth event in their program "Furla Series #01 Time After Time, Space After Space," curated by Bruna Roccasalva and Vincenzo de Bellis for the Museo del Novecento. It was a pleasure to once again meet up with Roccasalva and

de Bellis, who have been living in Minneapolis since Vincenzo was named the visual arts curator of the Walker Art Center, leaving the directorship of MiArt in Rabottini's hands. In the Fontana room on the Museo del Novecento's top floor, Christian Marclay presented *Concerto Spaziale* (Space Concert), 2018, a performance with cellist Okkyung Lee and percussionist Luc Müller. The work used objects found around Milan—marbles, suitcases, coffeepots, pieces of polystyrene, iron poles, and lamps—to make music.

On Saturday I was able to catch my breath for a split second and connect with some friends who had not yet seen the Prada Foundation's enormous show "Post Zang Tumb Tuuum. Art Life Politics: Italia 1918–1943," curated by Germano Celant. His inexhaustible mind is always raising the curatorial bar.

Sunday ostensibly marked the conclusion of the fair, but the intermingling of art and design—as only the Milanese do, and do well—continued. French art duo Anne and Patrick Poirier's show, "*Architectures des Mémoires*" (Architectures of Memories), housed in architect Luca Cipelletti's studio, was a voyage through remembrances of their Mesopotamian travels, as well as the inspiration for the Gardens of Memory, a cemetery in Gorgonzola that Cipelletti is in the process of building with the Poiriers. Conversation with this formidable couple is wide-ranging and intense: They confess that their relationship is animated by their capacity for both play and argument. It allows them to occupy a sense of normality.

I spent the evening at Beatrice Trussardi's home, once again a recipient of her gracious hospitality. In a building designed by Gio Ponti, I encountered Rabottini and other guests: collector Francesco Micheli; Andrea Buccellati, president and creative director of the jewelry company Buccellati; Emanuele Farneti, editor in chief of Italian *Vogue*; and Giulia Molteni, of the furniture company Molteni & C. The realm of design was well represented, especially with the arrival of Marcel Wanders and his friends.

On April 16, the Palazzo Reale was aglow for a gala dinner to celebrate the Salone del Mobile—-which was opening the next day—-hosted by its president, Claudio Luti, and his wife, Maria. It was a great conclusion to a long week of art—on a rain-free and pretty Monday, no less—and the perfect start to Milan Design Week.

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

— Michela Moro

Ribaltare la percezione del tempo. L'Archipelago di paradossi di John Isaacs a Milano

di [Redazione](#)



*John Isaacs, From a distance you look smaller but I know that you are there. Neon tube and transformer
2018, preview*

Dall'11 aprile al 29 giugno Galleria Poggiali presenta *Archipelago-from a distance you look smaller but I know that you are there*, la prima personale di John Isaacs (Lancaster, 1968) negli spazi milanesi della galleria. La mostra a cura di Pierre Yves Desaiwe si compone di tre elementi realizzati per l'occasione: una scultura, un neon e una fotografia che studiano la percezione del tempo e della storia.

L'artista inglese da sempre sperimenta i media più differenti e utilizza ogni tipo di materiale per raccontare i paradossi della società contemporanea, come la difficoltà di conciliare le esigenze del singolo individuo con quelle dell'intera umanità.



John Isaacs, The empty temple. Ceramic shellack epoxy resin 23 carat gold leaf-2018, preview.

La prima opera, *The empty temple* (2018), raffigura una benna per escavatore a grandezza naturale realizzata in ceramica, gomma lacca, resina epossidica e foglia oro a 23 carati. Una scultura paradossale che vuole rappresentare la forma del progresso, il nostro presente, come una struttura solida ma che in realtà potrebbe essere spazzata via al primo soffio di vento.

Se non ora allora quando. È così che la seconda opera, *From a distance you look smaller but I know that you are there*, vuole far riflettere lo spettatore sulle categorie di passato, presente e futuro. Una scritta al neon, realizzata nel 2018, posta sul muro bianco come un promemoria che rimanda alle nostre infinite possibilità di cambiamento.



John Isaacs, From a distance you look smaller but I know that you are there. Neon tube and transformer 2018, preview

Con l'ultima opera, *a perfect soul*, John Isaacs apre le porte della sua intimità attraverso una fotografia della figlia con la moglie ribaltando la nozione lineare del tempo e dei cicli di vita. Infatti è la bambina a tenere tra le mani la madre, non il contrario. Ancora una volta l'artista riesce ad aprire nello spettatore un nuovo dialogo rivelando la dimensione emotiva delle cose e il loro rapporto con l'essere umano.



*John Isaacs, A perfect soul.
Framed photographic print | photo
framed preview*



*John Isaacs, The Empty Temple.
Ceramic shellack epoxy resin 23 carat gold
leaf 2018, preview.*

Archipelago, alla Galleria Poggiali di Milano la prima personale di John Isaacs

Post on: Apr 12, 2018 [Alberto Rossi](#)



La Galleria Poggiali presenta ARCHIPELAGO – from a distance you look smaller but I know that you are there di John Isaacs, prima personale dell’artista inglese negli spazi milanesi della galleria, fino al 29 giugno 2018.

La mostra, a cura di Pierre Yves Desaive, apre in occasione dell'Art Week e di miart 2018, ventitreesima edizione della fiera d'arte moderna e contemporanea. Per la sua personale milanese l'artista presenta un progetto unico composto da **tre elementi realizzati per l'occasione – una scultura, un neon e una fotografia** – che riflettono sul tema del tempo, della sua sacralità e della sua percezione.

John Isaacs, artista poliedrico con oltre venti anni di carriera alle spalle, ha esordito in patria con la YBA -Young British Art- per poi spostarsi nel 2005 a Berlino, dove vive e lavora. Da allora la sua poetica si è evoluta diventando sempre più eclettica e meno legata allo stile britannico.

Pierre Yves Desaive, curatore della mostra, sottolinea come ARCHIPELAGO ruoti attorno alla necessità, apparentemente utopica, di conciliare le esigenze di un singolo individuo di fronte al travolgente fardello dell'intera umanità e allude all'interconnessione storica ma precaria di tutte le nostre vite.

Lo straniamento iniziale che producono le opere di questo artista riguarda un'essenza condivisa da tutti gli umani, una sensazione sublimata da una grande diversità di media e materiali capaci di catturare la fantasia dell'osservatore. Linguaggio e referenzialità hanno lo scopo di aprire a nuovi dialoghi in modo che, piuttosto che riaffermare un significato, questo si annulli per rivelare la dimensione emotiva delle cose e il loro rapporto con l'essere umano.

CULTURE

How shame translates into discomfoting works of art

It's a powerful human emotion, one we all feel but would prefer to avoid. Many artists have a lot to express when it comes to this topic. A current exhibition in Herford tests the boundaries of shame.



© Clemens Krauss/B. Borchardt

SHAME IN ART

Clemens Krauss: Self-portrait as a child (2017)

Laid flat on the ground, wrinkled and naked, the body acts as a starting point for this quasi-exhibitionist self-portrait by the Austrian artist Clemens Krauss. It is one of over 100 works in the exhibition "The Inner Skin - Art and Shame" currently on display at the Marta museum in Herford.

▶ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ◀ ▶

Who isn't familiar with the awful feeling of sinking in shame? Shame is one of the most basic human emotions. It can also manifest itself in a variety of ways, as shown in a new exhibition, "The Inner Skin - Art and Shame," now on show at the Marta museum in Herford until June 4, 2017.

The exhibition presents a variety of works, including paintings, drawings, photographs, sculptures, video installations and performances that deal with the topic of shame. Click through the gallery above to discover some of these "embarrassing" works of art.

La nueva luz del mundo: John Isaacs

POR ALEXLETO · 09/05/2016

Finalmente, y tal como había prometido el mes pasado, abandonamos los estados unidos para retornar al eurocentrismo propio que nos caracteriza, esa zona de confort tan propia de los occidentales.



I can't help the way i feel, 2003.

El país elegido este mes no es otro que la poderosa Alemania, ese país que tiene a casi toda Europa cogida por los coj**es y marca con su dura batuta el devenir del viejo continente. A pesar de que utilizaremos este territorio como cede central, hay que añadir, que el autor que nos concierne posee sus raíces de Lancaster, UK.

Este autor multidisciplinar, no es otro que John Isaacs. Estudió en L'Ecole des Beaux Artes, Dijon en 1990; completó sus estudios con una Licenciatura en Bellas Artes en

Cheltenham Art College en 1991, y una Maestría en Escultura en Londres en el Slade School of Art en 1993. Ha desarrollado múltiples exposiciones por todo el mundo y en sedes tan importantes como la Tate Modern de Londres o el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Kyoto, Japón; Además de participar en la 53ª Bienal de Venecia en el 2009.

Con un amplio y rico *curriculum* como este, está claro que nos encontramos ante uno de los grandes referentes a lo que arte contemporáneo se refiere, pues tanto reconocimiento y difusión no es algo gratuito, pues en su poder se encuentran obras de lo más rompedoras, críticas y transgresoras del momento.

Este autor no se cierra ante una disciplina en concreto, centrado en ello toda su producción, pues tal y como se caracterizan los virtuosos del campo artístico, se atreve con todo: desde el uso del *neón*, la piedra, el metal, pasando por la pintura, el dibujo, la tela y diversas instalaciones con todo tipo de materiales. Quizás por el material que sienta más devoción sea la cera con sus obras escultóricas que tanto lo caracterizan, pero como ya dije, puede con todo.



Everyone's talking about Jesus, 2005.

Utilizando el poder de la imagen creas extrañas, viscerales y, en ocasiones, grotescas imágenes que desafían las paradojas cotidianas de la sociedad contemporánea, mostrando cual espejo las terroríficas consecuencias de nuestros tóxicos modos de vida. En sus creaciones encontramos la intersección de la metáfora lúdica y un intenso pesimismo social, exponiendo a los espectadores, la parte más vulnerable de estos, a través de representaciones que manifiestan en su imagen. Un alto consumo de comida rápida, impulsada por el propio consumidor, los recursos de alimento descompensados, el aire y la polución, el



envenenamiento de la tierra y demás desastres naturales de nuestra sociedad globalizada.

A través de esta exploración altamente visual, explota los bajos instintos de la humanidad materializada en obra artística de consumo. Isaac también reimagina el mundo a través de una óptica utópica, usando el humor para empujar los límites de la carne, los hueso y la psique humana.

Things that can be are that which we know, 2011.

Interview: John Isaacs

On the occasion of my visit to John Isaacs' exhibition 'Only Words' at Aeroplastics Contemporary I had the chance to meet the artist and engage in a conversation about his work, his career, and his thoughts on contemporary art. The result of this dialogue is the following transcription.

John Isaacs is a British artist born in 1968 who lives and works in Berlin. Isaacs has exhibited in well-known institutions and galleries such as Tate Britain, Lisson Gallery, Saatchi and Serpentine. If you Google John Isaacs you most certainly get acquainted with works that revolve around the aesthetics of the body and the flesh – obese deformed bodies, severed legs, detached shark fins. However, the scope of his work is unveiled with this conversation and during the course of this exhibition, where Isaacs guides me through the idiosyncrasies/intricacies of each work and talks about his career and background.

John Isaacs: When people ask me what I do I say I am an artist, but sometimes I say... I am not really an artist. It has something to do with being in the middle of a story. Genuinely, for me, the point of my artistic production is not technicality; it is a form of healing and philosophy. That is also why the works are very different. A lot of the shows I do don't look like a solo exhibition, they look, instead, like a curated group exhibition. This is a form of anonymity, but it is also a form of, in a way, anti-art.

And indeed the show 'Only Words' presents works in diametrically opposed techniques as in neon, bronze, terracotta, and photography.

It is a characteristic of Isaacs' work to complete each piece with an evocative title. Each individual piece addresses a question, but the artist says it is key to place works together, to create analogies and dialogues by which new meanings are found. Historical and artistic references are to be discovered along this exhibition.

By the entrance, a terracotta hand points to an abstract neon compass (as Isaacs explained, it was created based on one of his daughter's doodles). Right there, an initial clash of aesthetics (the contemporary and industrial aspect of the neon face to face with a seemingly historical relic). The hand – 'The cyclical development of stasis' – with a strong pointing gesture (either accusatory or didactic, a gesture that has permeated our culture and collective memory) is enclosed in a vitrine. In effect, this contemporary object simulates an artefact that somehow appears to have spent years submerged in deep sea water. John Isaacs told me about the curious incident that led to the materialization of this hand and how it became an illusory museum piece:

JI: Actually, when I modelled it that wasn't the initial intention, because I modelled the whole hand, but during the firing process in the oven it exploded. I was on the verge of throwing it away, but then I realised I could use the pieces and restore this object. The whole idea of vitrine is an important aspect of it. In a way, this is me as a contemporary artist trying to play like a museum, like an archive or archaeological find. I modelled the hand in terracotta, which is a very traditional sculpture material from Roman/Greek times. That is also why it has these casts on it looking like an amphora. My intention was to hope that people would look at it and have the sense that this is an artefact from thousands of years.

This work and its title ('The cyclical development of stasis') open the tone of this exhibition that is a journey in the conscience of an historical and cultural past, of the political and social tensions of the present and a slight hope for the future – although history reveals itself to be cyclic and static. This idea is also preponderant in the exhibition's title 'Only Words'. Isaacs' work is not about activism nor the artist promotes a thesis or solution. It doesn't ask for a passive and contemplative attitude either. The exhibition is made for the viewer (who is sometimes included and reflected in the artwork) and aims to raise questions.



John Isaacs, 'The radical development of meat', 2015, terracotta, plaster, steel, glass, wood, 150 x 38 x 78 cm, unique. Courtesy of the artist and Persepolis contemporary, Brussels.

'The architecture of empathy' is a small size life jacket carved in marble and placed in front of a mirror. This work is an example of the inclusion of the viewer, thereby faced with current political and moral issues. John Isaacs talks about this work and the importance of another work with the same title (which is not included in this exhibition):

JI: This sculpture, of course right now, seems to be a comment on the refugee crisis.

CV: Was it made in that context?

JI: Yes. But the title of the work is 'The architecture of empathy'. Though new stories happen, the world moves on and things change, but then a similar moment occurs in some other country or some other situation. This idea of sailing alive is something from beyond this moment of the refugee crisis. This sculpture comes from another work that I've made a few years ago with the same title ('The Architecture of Empathy'). This is Pietà covered in fabric, which is also carved in marble. I don't make it, this is done by artigiani in Carrara, the traditional place for making marble. I make the model and they work from that. The first sculpture, Pietà, was for me an attempt to bring this notion of empathy out of the church and back into the world. Because the church is saying one thing, but it makes people behave in a different way.

CV: But the figure is covered...

JI: Yes, because I chose to give it no identity, which happens quite often in my work. There is no physical representation of people because then it's the other, it is not possible to project into it. By covering this figure, which you can even recognize with the covering on, you see this connection with the mother and the child and then it takes it away from the Madonna and Jesus and brings into all these images we know... of conflict, but also when people die and you have these sheets over the furniture. By covering this icon of empathy I am giving it a rebirth because, in classical marble sculpture, the way the drapery was used was not to cover the body, but to emphasize it. The drapery represented the spirit and the body was the flesh, the carnal (like the meat key upstairs). My feeling, my intention is that these foldings, this transformation of stone into this soft fabric-like quality, transform it into a kind of spiritual object.

CV: Like the matter referred to as ectoplasm?

JI: Yes. It is as heavy as stone, but it has this lightness. And again, the viewer fills in the rest of the story because there is no human representation, so it is open to everybody. It is a child's life jacket because it is too small. It is also a theme that seems to be in this exhibition not necessarily on purpose (the compass, the chair, this work). There are a few works that give this sense of origin and of course children represent the future, but they also represent vulnerability, they need protecting, and the people that protect them aren't always the best people to do that. Again, like I was saying earlier, there is this sense of damage that is done and the impact it has in the future. I am coming from the past because we all grow up into a world in which maybe some of the shadows in it are not of our asking.

In the next room we find 'Inconsolus (when you talk about love)' and 'This is the place' (a giant damaged white flag resembling a tent, a boat, and an "act of surrender"). 'Inconsolus' is a neon sentence taken from a poem written by the artist – "when you talk about love you make me feel invisible". These two works positioned near 'The Architecture of Empathy' establish a correlation and acquire a political sense:

JI: After having it read for a while, I found that these two lines had the right kind of sentiment. And again it's this double thing because it has a kind of political level – how quite often a lot of us feel in the face of the so-called democratic process, it lies. This work, which is actually from a poem, has this very personal possibility, and a very politicized possibility, and is now even more thrown in that direction.



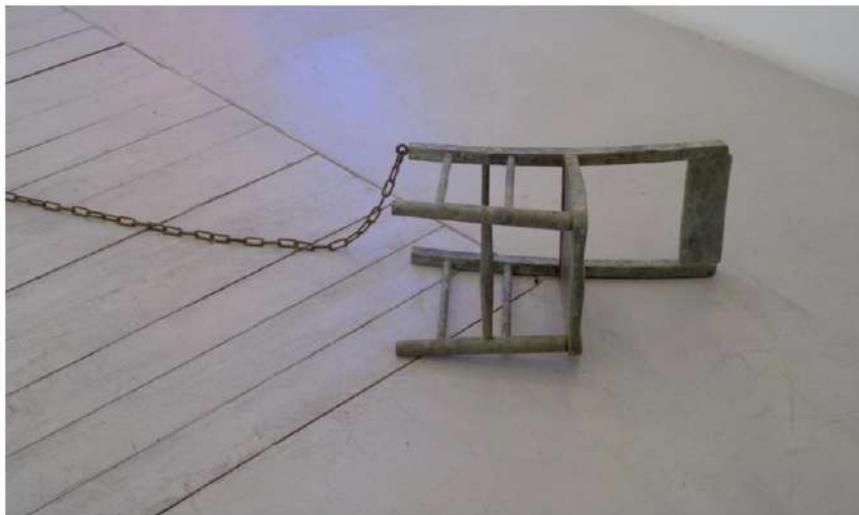
John Isaacs 'Only Words' Installation View, Courtesy of Aesthetica contemporary, Brussels.

The idea of vulnerability is present in most of John Isaacs' body of work and is explicit in this exhibition – it subtly surfaces through the fragility of the material or in references to childhood. On the second floor we find 'Votes for Children', a slogan written over stitched fabric, bordering both absurdity and hope.

JI: I can't remember how or why, but there's a book about the 100 favourite objects in the British Museum collection, done by the director of the British Museum in London. In this book there's a British coin from 1912 that stamps 'Votes for Women'. Women in England were stamping this propaganda onto money and putting it back into circulation. This was a very clever way of propaganda in 1912. [Talking about 'Votes for Children'] I like these fabric banners, traditionally made by the 'low ladies' or people like coal miners. The pattern on the front came from a Polynesian shield. The slogan 'Votes for Children' is again a kind of double thing – 'how you like me full of hope and full of fear' situation. The idea of children voting would be like in *Lord of the flies*, a book by a British author in which an airplane full of schoolchildren crashes on an island and after a few weeks someone becomes a leader and someone else wants to be leader. Within two or three weeks these boys split into two tribes and they start fighting each other. In the end, human nature is such that even children can't share a toy. They are maybe no better than us. We have consumed the present to give nothing for the future. This is a kind of naïve hope, but also in a way, like the life jacket downstairs in front of the mirror, we all are implicated. So it's a big question, but it is not political propaganda.

Again, in the next room, while looking at 'Cast from light and dark your shadow is no different from mine' I noticed it was a children's chair made of bronze. Although the reference to children is present here again, John Isaacs explains that what makes this sculpture (and other sculptures) so vulnerable is the choice of material – bronze.

JI: It's again another attempt to try to bring this sense of commonality and History. In the end, simply the chair is a child chair, but in my mind it is like an anchor. This idea of childhood being the foundation of our psyche (which is the anchor) has nothing to do with childhood slavery. I have a few of these bronzes. What is interesting for me, not necessarily in this sculpture, but in the other bronze pieces that I've made, is that people make this mistake – they look at bronze and think it is a very strong permanent material, but, politically it is very mercurial. It's like quicksilver. The only classical bronzes we have only survived because they were hidden. People who don't give a shit about art would melt the bronze and turn it into cannons or nails. People look at a bronze sculpture and they think it's made of bronze so it will be like that forever, but it's not the case. It exists as long as people believe in it. One of the most powerful images that I have seen recently is the one of the statue of Saddam Hussein being pulled down by the American soldiers when they invaded Iraq. You think of all these dictators and these hundreds of Lenin and Stalin sculptures all over Russia and they are now obsolete. Bronze is not permanent. This could be heated up and you could make another shape out of it. I like the significance of the material. If it was a wooden chair it would have a completely different meaning.



John Isaacs, Cast from light and dark your shadow is no different from mine, 2015, shalmed child chair of patinated bronze, steel, variable dimensions, ed. of 4 + 2 AP. Courtesy the artist and Persepolis contemporary, Brussels.

In this room we find another neon light. This time a simple, minimal, circular shape – a bit unusual in John Isaacs' work – half blue, half red – 'Blood and Tears'. What is not so unusual is the evidence of the body and flesh, which this time turns up to be shaped like a giant meat key – 'Everything given nothing lost'.

Perhaps the most intriguing works in this exhibition are two of his most recent creations. 'The unseen structure' is again an illusory relic or archaeological discovery – an anthropomorphic stone figure, with traces of eyes and nose, on which seven golden eggs are piled up. Behind the sculpture, but part of it, we find a small steel door. Enclosed in a small dark room and under a spotlight, this structure/creature becomes even more theatrical and mysterious. John Isaacs plays with notions of time and history and challenges the viewer to discover what is created by the artist and what is a historical finding. Isaacs demystified this work and explained how it was created.

JI: It is ceramics. I made this to look like an old oven, like this object needs sustaining. I started the eggs for another piece, which I did not finish. The underneath piece was an accidental discovery while I was doing some research in this exhibition (in London) about Stanley Kubrick the filmmaker. I was in his archive looking through material and there was this book about minimal forms and then there was a small Neolithic figure, two eyes and this nose, a very simple form. I just started it in clay and slowly came to be this. I am not sure what it is, what it represents, but it has got a very odd aura to it. And there is a mysticism – seven eggs, seven days. They almost have a planetary feeling. In my work there is this sense of déjà vu. I am quite often using clichés.



Some of the artist's works have an encyclopedic character, which could be related to his background in science. Moved by his curiosity, Isaacs develops a constant research of historical facts, literature, and cultural studies that allows him to create associations of images that are etched in our memory (which makes me think of Aby Warburg's investigation and atlas – 'Mnemosyne'). Isaacs is not afraid to entrust his viewers with his most recent works, in the sense that he wishes them to be put to test, curiously listening to the viewer and absorbing their interpretation and questions. 'What makes certain' is one of these works, conceived just before this particular exhibition. Again, a sentence over stitched fabric ('Storm blown sea calmed like nerves on the edge again'), with a fragile looking golden ladder leaning over it, finds its way to proclaim the already mentioned vulnerability existent across this exhibition and to bring to surface the idea of cycle and chain.

JI: I am fascinated by this sentence that is going in so many directions. I can't even remember where it came from. I am sure I wrote it, but it could be like the Aby Warburg verbal collective memory, because I don't even know if I am able to write something like this. I think it is in one of my sketchbooks. There is something about these words, which is almost like war, almost like the threat of war, almost like love. It's like this feeling of passion, danger, and fragility.

John Isaacs has his eyes open to the world – as a scientist, he analyses political, historical, anthropological facts, he collects ideas (from an archive or in the simple interactions of life with his daughter), and, above all, he is a concerned human being who translates into images the frailty of being in a world dominated by words. I believe the most permanent question in this exhibition is – Is there any hope in stasis?

JI: I think for me this idea of being historical, of being anonymous, (and this is something that fascinates me not just in art but in life) is this sense that we are born into a landscape, which is already formed; we learn a language, which is already there, and the world is built on a way that maybe we didn't intend it to be. We are walking in the shadows of our ancestors and so something like this for me is a kind of cathartic idea of where we are, where we were, and where we will be. This is stasis, static.

By: Catarina Vaz

LAVIE

ARTE AL CUADRADO

A punto de cumplir 13 años con la galería Travesía Cuatro, Inés López-Quesada y Silvia Ortiz consolidan su presencia en el circuito de galerías de España y México. Este mes, participarán en Zona Maco.

Por FELIPE PANDO Foto PABLO GÓMEZ-OSANDO

Es 2004. Es el número cuatro de la calle Travesía de San Mateo, en Madrid. Inés López-Quesada y Silvia Ortiz abren una galería a la que llaman Travesía Cuatro. Ninguna supera los 30 años pero tienen una idea clara de lo que desean hacer: crear un espacio de exposición y venta del trabajo de aquellos artistas que, tal como ellas, apenas están iniciando. Artistas emergentes y de carrera media que tienen hambre de un sueño llamado «futuro». Comenzaron entonces a hacer lo que se supone que debe hacer un galerista: encontrar artistas, establecer contactos, realizar y promover sus exposiciones, viajar a distintas ferias y vender.

«Era jovencísima y tenía poca experiencia cuando abrí la galería. Hemos aprendido todo. Los últimos 15 años en el mundo del arte contemporáneo han sido una revolución. Ha cambiado todo», recuerda Inés.

Una de sus primeras travesías las llevó a México, en 2004, para participar en la primera edición de una feria que comenzaba a causar expectativas entre coleccionistas y adeptos al arte: Maco (hoy Zona Maco). Esta decisión no fue cuestión del azar. En palabras de la galerista, a principios del milenio, México era un destino clave por el momento que estaba viviendo: «De cara al mundo se dio una escena mexicana muy fuerte gracias a una serie de artistas que saltaron a la palestra internacional, como Francis Alÿs y toda la generación que vino después de Gabriel Orozco; la galería Kurimanzutto, Jumes como colección, Caahitémic Medina y Guillermo Santamarina como curadores». Todos esos factores se sumaron para que las socias pusieran especial atención en el país. En los pasillos de la feria, también conocieron a artistas que más adelante se convertirían en las cartas fuertes de su galería, como José Dávila, Gonzalo Lebrija o Jorge Méndez Blake. Aunque tener un lazo tan fuerte con México

también tuvo otras consecuencias: «Durante muchos años la gente pensó que éramos una galería mexicana, cuando ni siquiera habíamos abierto aquí», explica Silvia.

México, además, se convirtió en un mercado importante para ellas en términos de negocio, y hoy representa alrededor de 40% de sus ventas, más del doble de las que registran en España.

LA TRAVESÍA MEXICANA

Es 2013. Es el número 2207 de la avenida La Paz de Guadalajara, México. Es la Casa Franco, construida por Luis Barragán en 1929.

Diez años después de inaugurar su galería en Madrid, Silvia e Inés se encuentran en México para abrir su segundo recinto, esta vez en la capital de Jalisco. Su decisión acompaña varios razonamientos: «En Guadalajara había un hueco muy importante para llenar en el ámbito galerístico y teníamos la propuesta de un socio local, José Noel Suro, quien tiene una fábrica de cerámica familiar que reconvirtió en productora de arte contemporáneo...» —dice Silvia, a lo que añade:— «Abrir ahí nos acercaba mucho a los artistas; podíamos estar cerca de sus estudios y entender sus procesos creativos».

A punto de cumplir 13 años, hoy representan a creadores como Asunción Molinos Gordo, Sarah Crowner, Milena Muñiz, John Isaacs y Mateo López. Nombres que promueven en sus dos galerías y en ferias como Art Basel Miami —en la que han participado durante los últimos siete años—, Arco en Madrid o SP-Arte en São Paulo. Este año, algunos de sus planes incluyen participar en ferias como Zona Maco, Art Dubai y Frieze Nueva York, en la que estarán por segunda vez.

Al final, tienen claro el objetivo de una galería y quizá ese sea el mejor consejo para empujar el cambio: «Nuestro negocio es amor al arte, pero vendemos arte; eso no se puede olvidar», concluye Inés. ■

travesiacuatro.com / [@travesiacuatro](https://www.instagram.com/travesiacuatro)

Silvia Ortiz e Inés López-Quesada en su galería con sede en Madrid. Al fondo, una pieza del artista inglés John Isaacs.

136 | L'OFFICIEL | FEBRERO 2016



arte AD



La Sala VIP de ARCOmadrid diseñada por Izaskun Chinchilla para El Corte Inglés. Izda., fotografía Double Fantasy de Marius Engh, en Luis Adelantado.



rázará intervenciones específicas en diversos espacios de la capital, desde el *Museo Romántico* hasta la *Casa Anabé*, y en el *Cinco de Mayo*. *Arto* se celebrará un encuentro con comisarios que han colaborado con la cita a lo largo de su historia. El programa revela algunas tendencias: la pintura es un valor seguro y aporta el impulso que necesita el discurso de la recuperación. Se prodiga con nombres de diversas generaciones y nacionalidades: Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa, Albert Oehlen, Pedro Cabrita Reis, Philipp Fröhlich, Sandra Gamarra, Alain Urrutia, Liliam Porter, Antonio Montalvo, Jorge Galindo, Rubén Guerrero, Alex Marco, Alex Katz, Luis Gordillo, Victoria Civera... Por otro lado se mantiene la importancia del arte político, especialmente presente en propuestas como la de la galería parisina *Mor Charpentier*. Alex Mor, su copropietario, lo explica. "Llevamos una selección que refleja la complejidad de la situación política y cultural que vive el mundo". Eso incluye a Teresa Margolles, Alexander Apóstol, Rossella Biscotti, Marwa Arsanios o al anglo-libanés Lawrence Abu Hamdan. Este último nos remite a otro factor destacable: el peso creciente de Oriente Medio con espacios con fuerte presencia de creadores nacidos allí, como *La Belle van der Eynde*, *Selma Feriani* o *Sabrina Amirani*, sumados al bombazo en la elección de una de las ganadoras del *Premio A al Coleccionismo* otorgado por la



Escultura *The cyclical development of status* de John Isaacs, en Travesía Cuatro, Izda.; *Rin Down Vanity* de Erik Parker, en Javier López.

La «Pietà» velata in mostra a Concesio

Presso la Collezione Paolo VI inaugurata il 14 maggio l'opera «The Architecture of Empaty» di John Isaacs, artista inglese.

di **Giulia Astorri** - 15 Maggio 2014 - 9:53



L'affascinante e straordinaria opera di John Isaacs, artista di fama internazionale, «The Architecture of Empaty» è stata inaugurata il 14 maggio presso la Collezione Paolo VI di Concesio(Brescia). Un gruppo statuario di quattro tonnellate di marmo di Carrara, concesso in comodato dalla Galleria d'arte Massimo Minini sino al 2015, è celato da un drappo misterioso.

La scultura, collocata sopra un basamento in acciaio antistante la Collezione, si svela e si nasconde: richiamando, anche in modo plateale, la Pietà di Michelangelo. L'opera marmorea di Isaacs, oltre a rendere omaggio al grande artista italiano, porta con sé il mistero infinito della creazione estetica e la delicata purezza dell'arte. Il drappeggio, che ricrea un'atmosfera unica e impareggiabile, ricopre dolcemente la finezza delle lavorazioni rappresentate, quasi come se volesse proteggere quest'opera incantevole.

«The Architecture of Empathy» è visitabile negli orari d'apertura del museo: dal martedì al venerdì dalle 9 alle 12 e dalle 15 alle 17; il sabato dalle 14 alle 19.

La Pietà di John Isaacs da Massimo Minini

By **Maria Marzia Minelli** -1 marzo 2014

GALLERIA MASSIMO MININI, BRESCIA – FINO ALL'8 MARZO 2014.
ATTRAVERSO LA RIPROPOSIZIONE DELLA SCULTURA
MICHELANGIOLESCA, ISAACS EVIDENZIA IL RUOLO DELL'ARTE COME
MEDIUM TRA INDIVIDUO E SOCIETÀ.



*John Isaacs - The architecture of empathy -
veduta della mostra presso la Galleria Massimo Minini, Brescia 2014*

Per la sua prima mostra in Italia, **John Isaacs** (Lancaster, 1968; vive a Berlino) offre una riflessione attraverso la quale rivela cosa sia secondo lui l'essenza dell'arte. *“Il mio lavoro è assenza fatta presenza”*. L'arte è l'infinita concatenazione di riflessioni che scaturisce dall'incontro con l'oggetto: il rapporto di comunicazione che si crea tra l'opera e chi la osserva è empatia potentissima, capace di scendere negli abissi dell'intimo o di salire fino alla dimensione del divino. Perfetto corrispettivo oggettivo di questo pensiero è la grande scultura che accoglie il visitatore in galleria: una *Pietà* di Michelangelo velata. Un drappo in marmo copre ma non cela, lasciando a chi osserva quell'interstizio fondamentale affinché la relazione tra lui e la scultura possa prendere il volo verso un orizzonte del quale l'artista non conosce le coordinate, ma della cui atmosfera è imprescindibilmente autore.

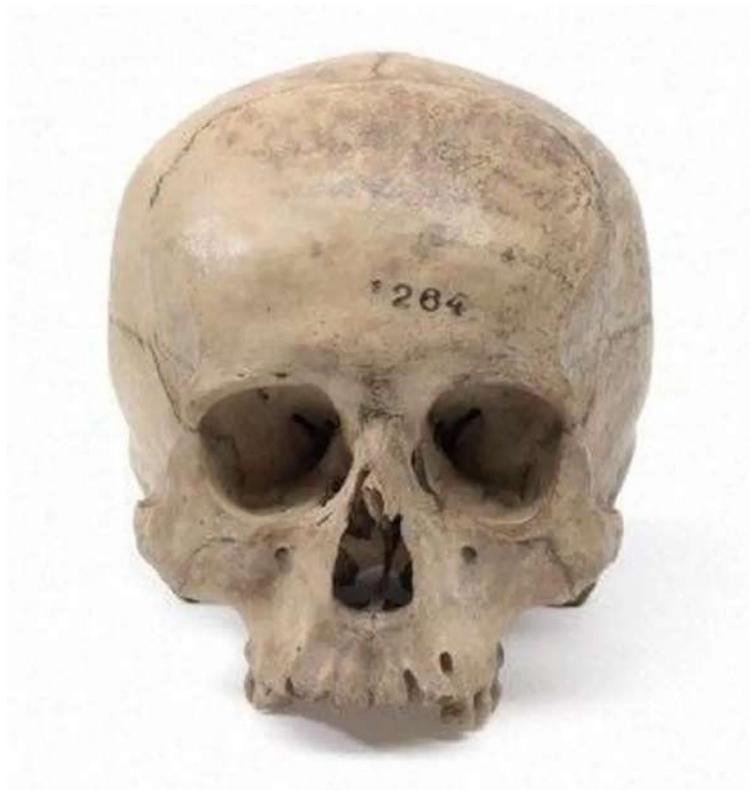
Maria Marzia Minelli

To die for: Inventive and playful artworks that frame death as a happy ending

A show titled *Death: A Self-Portrait* might sound morbid. But the colourful, inventive and playful artworks make for an approachable, even life-affirming, exhibition, as Adrian Hamilton discovers

Adrian Hamilton@IndyVoices

Monday 19 November 2012



Death and taxes are no longer as certain as Benjamin Franklin's famous saying would have it. Taxes aren't paid by the rich. Death in a secular and medicalised world has been made into something to be put off.

All credit then to the Wellcome Foundation for holding a show that reminds us that death has been an intrinsic part of life through most of human history. Plague, famine and war made certain that it was all around the living, something to be feared, embraced and prepared for. Take heed of death, said the late medieval church, for judgement will surely follow. Embrace death said the Mexican celebrators of the Day of the Dead, for through it you honour your

ancestors. Accept it as a good thing, taught the Buddhists, for it will be followed by rebirth in an endless cycle until you can break free of it altogether.

Wellcome Death may not be the best image to draw in the crowds. But in fact it is a surprisingly approachable exhibition, full of colour, inventiveness and occasional fun. That is primarily due to the private collection from which the show is drawn. Over the last dozen years, Richard Harris, a Chicago print dealer and book collector, has amassed some 2,000 artefacts, paintings, memorabilia and ephemera devoted to the subject, of which some 300 are on display here.

His collection was less the product of personal concern with the subject, he explains, than a desire to build a holding for public display in his retirement years, inspired by a small show of memento mori objects seen at the Maastricht Fair. "I went back to Chicago," he recalls, "and sought the advice of an independent art expert who said 'yes, we could find some 40 works to make a gathering of masterpieces'. But I came away thinking, no, that's not what I want. What I really wish is to gather everything about it, great and small, without regard to prestige."

The result is a collection filled with Harris's sense of opening avenues and new finds but carefully selected and spaciouly displayed by the curator, Kate Forde. As a book dealer, Harris started with a volume of the Nuremberg Chronicle published in 1493 containing engravings of the Dance of Death theme that so obsessed the art of the late Middle Ages. Sometimes playing a violin, sometimes just dancing, death as a skeleton steals up on rich and poor, regardless of rank or virtue. On show also are the complete sets of Jacques Callot's Miseries of War, Goya's The Disasters of War and Otto Dix's War – surely the greatest statements on the horrors of conflict ever made in art. How anyone could go to war after seeing Goya's agonized depictions of the inhumanity it brings on all sides or Otto Dix's visions of death and destruction in the First World War in which he served is something that only the politicians who lead us there could answer.

The violence of death is never far from its treatment in European culture nor the yearning for a "good death" in bed, surrounded by family and priest to see the soul on to its next world. The grinning skull behind the painted face of fashion and youth is a constant theme of painting. Go to the more popular ephemera of playing cards, puppets and prints and it is treated more humorously. There is a group of US puppets to remind one that skeletons are part of the play of children, no more so than in the burgeoning celebration of Hallowe'en.

Other cultures have taken death to heart as part of popular belief in spirits and the worship of ancestors. There's a splendid papier mâché mask by a notable "cartoneros" sculptor, and a series of pictures, to remind one of Mexico's Day of the Dead festival. The demons of the Himalayas are just as ferocious in aspect and ritual, representations of the sorrows and evils of the world that have to be conquered. But then a wonderfully cheerful Japanese painting, Frolicking Skeletons by Kawanabe Kyosai (1831-1889) can't fail to raise a smile with its jangling, dancing and chasing skeletons as a seated guardian figure from South Sulawesi in Indonesia – a recent purchase – looks positively serene in its unblinking gaze.

Not the least of the virtues of the Richard Harris Collection is that it includes contemporary art and works commissioned by Harris himself. A one-ton chandelier made up of plaster casts of bones, *In the Eyes of Others*, by the British artist, Jodie Carey, presents both the air of luxury with the reality of bone. A startling life-size plaster and wax image of a truncated torso figure on a crate addressed to the artist by the British sculptor John Isaacs, *Are You Still Mad at Me?* shocks you into questioning pain inflicted, while an installation by June Leaf, *Gentleman on Green Table*, is of a skeletal figure in tin and wire leaning forward in pain and uncertainty. In a series commissioned from the Mexican Marcos Raya, the artist pastes on skulls and empty eye sockets on to family photographs, while another commission, by the Hungarian artist Balint Zsako makes a collage of all the bones in a body as engraved by a 17th-century artist.

However wide-ranging, no exhibition can be fully comprehensive on a subject as big as this. One could have done with some Egyptian objects to reflect an obsession with death and afterlife that survives to this day in the City of the Dead. Although the exhibition touches on it, there was something supremely sentimental, perverse even, in the 19th-century fascination with beauty in death and its place as the highest expression of love. The agony is there in the prints of Käthe Kollwitz's *Tod und Frau* from 1910 and the prints of James Ensor but not the unsettling eroticism of the corpse in Klimt and the Pre-Raphaelites.

But then that is the beauty of the Harris Collection. It makes you think positively about our final end. For us, as for Harris, the gathering of objects becomes a means of exploration not revulsion. Has he finished with it? Stupid question. He's just bought an old Chevy Impala painted all over for the Day of the Dead. And it runs. One can see that there is no end to it until the skeleton with the violin comes to dance with him.

Looking death in the face: The amazing exhibition of over 300 items showing attitudes to mortality around the globe

By [MARK PRIGG](#)

PUBLISHED: 16:14 BST, 14 November 2012

Try as we might, there's no escaping death.

Art collector Richard Harris has decided to embrace it instead - and wants the rest of us to do the same.

The retired Chicago print dealer has spent years acquiring works imbued with mortality, from 18th-century anatomical drawings to Tibetan skull masks and papier-mache skeletons from Mexico.



A visitor looks at one of the works called 'Are you still mad at me?' by John Isaacs at 'Death: A Self-portrait' which opened at the Wellcome Collection in London.

Some 300 items from his trove are on display at London's Wellcome Collection in an exhibition that asks whether art can help us understand and prepare for death.

75-year-old Ford is an cheerful figure who laughs when asked if he is, perhaps, a little obsessed with death.

'Of course not!' he said Wednesday at a preview of the show, which opens to the public on Thursday and runs until Feb. 24.

'I half-jokingly say it's a paean to death so he'll ignore me a little longer,' Harris said.

'But I think it's more that the iconography, the imagery is fascinating.

'A skull is a skull and a skeleton is a skeleton, but it has been depicted by almost every artist through their own eyes.'

The varying ways that different cultures have dealt with death is what fascinated the Wellcome Collection, which is dedicated to mapping the ways in which art, medicine and science overlap.

Curator Kate Forde has arranged Harris's artworks into a series of rooms that explore distinct aspects of the relationship between humans and our inevitable demise.

One room focuses on the contemplation of mortality through artistic memento mori, such as skulls placed at the center of still-life paintings.

A section on commemoration includes Tibetan ceremonial bowls made with pieces of human skull; a scarecrow-like grave guardian from the Pacific islands; and skeletons from Mexico's vibrant Day of the Dead festivities, when families honor departed loved ones.

Another room looks at the powerful relationship between sex and death, through images including a 16th-century engraving of a skeleton standing between the naked Adam and Eve.

A room on violent death includes searing depictions of war, from the 17th-century etchings of Jacques Callot to German artist Otto Dix's etchings of World War I trench warfare. In Dix's work, scenes of soldiers in trenches, dead bodies and mutilated corpses are both harrowing and beautiful.

The works span the centuries, from skeletons enacting a triumphant Dance of Death in the 1493 'Nuremberg Chronicle' - one of the earliest printed books - to Rembrandt prints and sculptures by contemporary artists.

These include 'In the Eyes of Others,' a huge chandelier made from 3,000 plaster bones by British artist Jodie Carey, and John Isaacs' 'Are You Still Mad at Me?' - a not-for-the-squeamish sculpture of a decayed and partially dismembered body.

Forde senses a resurgent interest in death among today's artists - just think of Damien Hirst, with his rotting animal carcasses and diamond-encrusted skull. She suggests it may be a product of Western society's desire to tidy death away.

'In Western secular culture, death happens offstage, in private.

It's medicalized and professionalized.

Only a century back, death would have been at home,' she said. 'I do think we have lost some vocabulary of talking about it - talking about mourning and contemplating mortality.'

Art, she says, can help remind us that 'death is part of life and not simply a void into which we drop.'

Harris says he does not know the value of his collection, which numbers some 2,000 items and is still growing.

His latest purchase, sadly not on display in London, is a 1969 Chevrolet Impala adorned with Day of the Dead motifs.

'My wife,' he said, 'has been very understanding and very patient.'

He hopes to take his collection on tour around the world.

'All the world needs, in my mind, to promote the conversation and the dialogue about death,' he said. 'It is an event that is going to happen to all of us, whether we like it or not.'



Collection owner Richard Harris stands in front of a work by Mexican artist Marcos Raya called Family Portrait : Wedding

ARTE

El almacén de sueños de John Isaacs

YOU ARE INNOCENT WHEN YOU DREAM. GALERÍA TRAVESIA CUATRO. San Mateo, 16. MADRID. Hasta el 6 de noviembre. De 1.000 a 10.000 E.

Como el encuentro fortuito de objetos en un almacén, varias piezas juntas y cerca de la entrada constituyen el núcleo de esta individual de John Isaacs (1968). Ante la enorme fotografía de un simple papel con manchas de tinta, un *rickshaw* hecho con una butaca acoplada a una bici infantil. Enfrente, neones donde se entrecruzan las palabras "seguir", "lidentar", "en busca de", "alguien para". La (habitual) reflexión del artista inglés sobre el poder establecido como resultado de una cesión se asocia de

modo vacilante con la inocencia infantil. A continuación, tres figuras de cerámica con formas entre grotescas y absurdas. Una gran vasija gris oscuro hinchada como a punto de estallar que recuerda a un fetiche primitivo y simboliza la duda contenida. Una cabeza con grifo de bar en lugar de boca que escancia alcohol para que podamos entrar en contacto trascendental con el cosmos. Y una especie de corazón

descompuesto y veridoso, como quebrado por el uso, que evoca el amor como acto de donación. Más allá de ese centro, un megáfono bañado en oro (la comuni-

nicación es lo precioso) y dibujos herméticos.

Isaacs nos invita a una selva de arcanos donde las diferentes estrategias narrativas y formales (entre lo conceptual y lo simbolista) sirven para un discurso poético y crítico que da la vuelta al valor externo del objeto artístico para generar una alternativa orgánica que procede del mundo del sueño y sirve de llave para acceder a él.



VISTA DE LA EXPOSICIÓN

ABEL H. POZUELO

MUSAC

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León



PROGRAMA EXPOSITIVO

Próximas exposiciones 22/10/10 - 09/01/11

Laboratorio 987

CGEM: Apuntes sobre la emancipación

Isabel Carvajal, Carolina Caycedo, Gaila Fernández, Aitana Lara, José Wertheim

Proyecto Víctimas

Pulgar. Proyecto editorial

Presentación del número especial de la revista *víctimas* coordinado por MUSAC

MUSAC OFF 24/10/10 - 16/01/11

Fundación Cerezales Antónino y Cía. Cerezales del Condado, León

Paisaje múltiple. Latinoamérica en la Colección MUSAC

Sergio Reinán, Andrés Gursky, Gilda Mantilla, Diego Ojeda, Cato Rosas, Miguel Ángel Rojas

Exposición actual 23/10/10 - 09/01/11

Modelos para Armar. Pensar Latinoamérica desde la Colección MUSAC

Cortés Ancoales, Alexander Apóstol, Julieta Aranda, IANF, Fernando Bryll, Erick Gutiérrez, Italo Zúñiga, Tania Bruguera, Francisco Bustos, Luis Camardese, Raymond Chaves, José Contreras, Dr. Leiria, Matias Duarte, Leonardo Dió, Gabriela Gersman, Carlos Gutiérrez, Mario Samir Torres, Diego Hernández, Juan Fernando Herán, Federico Herrera, María Teresa Hinojosa, (Lola) Lambrini, Jorge Macchi, Gilda Mantilla, Gilda Mantilla y Raymond Chaves, Teresa Margulies, Herán Marín, Ana Mendelsohn, Muelres Oyando, Óscar Muñoz, Rivier Reuterchawand, Quirán Ortega, Álvaro Oyarzun, Nicolás Perle, Jorge Pineda, Cato Rosas, Rosalinda Ruano, Pedro Reyes, Miguel Ángel Rojas, Martín Sastre, Mariana Szyll, y Rafael Ortega, Yvonne Soares, Javier Tellez, Mayr Vilmas, Cato Rosas

PROGRAMA DE PENSAMIENTO

6 y 7 de noviembre, 2010

Seminario Pensar Latinoamérica. Construcciones Culturales Contemporáneas

Plataforma de reflexión crítica sobre Latinoamérica. Un territorio en constante mutación, en proceso de reconfiguración, abierto a intervenciones culturales y situado en el centro de los procesos de transformación del siglo XXI, que será abordado en cuatro mesas de discusión:

Antigestión y transmisión del conocimiento: otros modelos de escuela. Estrella de Diego, Eduardo Azaña, Michèle Marzachi, Sofía Olancha

El museo como plataforma de reflexión y pensamiento.

Agustín Pérez Rubio, Jaime Cortés, Ursula Davis Villa, Sofía Hernández Chang, Luca Savio

Colectivo y resistencia de artistas: espacios de producción, difusión e intercambio

Octavio Zaya, Darida Castro, Catalina Lozano, Ana María Millán, Mónica Ramírez

Iniciativas privadas que generan cambio social

Maria Inés Rodríguez, Gabriel Pérez Samartín, Juan Wertheim, Juan Manuel Schaverra, Claudia Fernández

11 de diciembre, 2010

II Foro de la Edición. Publicaciones Independientes de Arte en Latinoamérica

Foro abierto a editores, artistas, pensadores y mediadores culturales, con la presencia de los editores de las revistas *Juan March* (Perú), *populartop* (Colombia), *Trópicos*, *Percepción* (Argentina)

MUSAC, Avda Reyes Lineros, 24, 24009, León, España

www.musac.es

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León

Patrocinador:





John Isaacs, *It is for you that I this (hippy scalp)*, 2009, wax, oil paint, human hair, wood, glass, steel, velvet, 20 x 20 x 71".

BERLIN

John Isaacs

WENDT + FRIEDMANN
GALERIE

Heidestrasse 54

January 15–March 6, 2010

The centerpiece of “Tears Welling Up Inside,” British artist John Isaacs’s darkly witty solo exhibition, is titled *It is for you that I this (hippy scalp)*, 2009. Here, a delicate Victorian-looking wood and glass vitrine at the entrance of this charming town-house gallery holds a grotesque form—a meaty, veiny scalp streaming platinum-blond hair. Despite the title, the scalp looks exactly like the

head of one of the blond nihilists in *The Big Lebowski* (1998), and in that echo, it seems, is embedded the gritty tension of Isaacs’s work.

In an adjacent room there is a massive, meticulously crafted sculpture that depicts a pile of feces overflowing from a box made of bathroom tiles. Another sculpture consists of a weathered wooden armchair with a sallow floral print sitting on top of a complicated contraption with mismatched wheels. The piece recalls a homemade wheelchair or, perhaps, a set piece from *Monty Python*. On a wall are notebook pages with ink drawings in which a black blob surrounds the word LOVE, a reference to Robert Indiana’s iconic 1964 work, except that Isaac’s version is made up of clippings from a hard-core porn magazine. In a similarly punky gesture, a careful doodle of a disembodied eyeball and lettering re-create the style of 1960s psychedelic posters but convey a profane message closer to a saying from a crotchety Bukowski. But within all the subversion of iconography there is an endearing, cheeky joy that evokes the flaws and virtues of an idealistic era. Fundamentally, Isaacs, like the Coen brothers’ nihilists, seems to happily believe in nothing—least of all his own cynicism.

— Ana Finel Honigman

ARTE / Exposiciones



Las Aljibes de Mexico (2006), de Guillermo Pérez Villalta.

La psicodelia de Ovidio

Guillermo Pérez Villalta
Galería Soledad Lorenzo, Orfila, 4, Madrid.
Hasta el 27 de marzo

Por Fernando Ibañeta March

Además de su nombre, Guillermo Pérez Villalta (Zarza, 1948) en algún lugar del catálogo de esta nueva muestra personal —de hecho, lo hace en referencia al título de cuadros inspirados por *Las metamorfosis*, de Ovidio, y auténtico núcleo vertebral de la exposición— que de algún modo viene a continuar lo presentado en esta misma galería en su anterior cita de 2005. Lo que de ningún modo significa que el visitante vaya a encontrarse aquí, simplemente, con más de lo mismo. Pues es cierto, de entrada, que, en estas pinturas, el artista gaditano prolonga las claves acuitadas, tres años atrás, con el espectador giro impune a su dibujo, mediante ese solitario entramado simbólico que nace del entrecruzamiento y suma alambicada entre el fíbril y líbrico desarrollo alcanzado en su interés por la codificación ornamental y lo no menos ambigua y lírica inversión alébrica de al tratamiento de la figura, más allá de toda connotación anatómica. Un giro que tiene su síntesis original en la serie de acuarelas que el artista realizó para ilustrar los viajes de Gulliver y en la que cabe situar un

punto de inflexión que ha determinado la evolución de su trabajo pictórico.

Pero, aún así, bien lejos de la mera extensión rutinaria, esas claves distintivas del último Pérez Villalta obtienen, en la sobria secuencia de obras desplegada en esta nueva ocasión, una vez rearmada como desahogado cumplimiento de supuestos y acciones, que viene a eleva, aún más so color, la sobria tradición abstracta en el devenir de su obra, justo cuando el artista cubre la sexta década de existencia. Plena desconcentración, en la que no cesa de renunciar, de reinventarse de hecho en una espiral ascendente que brisa, en acepción más estética, de las propias raíces. Ya que en esta última de sus visiones, no sólo rescata de nuevo a su arte el legado de la tradición, rescatando a menudo en ella los entresijos más raros e inéditos, destilando de esos matices un porvenir insoportable, sino que hace a la par aquí, insistentemente, el caso de la propia pintura, reformulando incluso determinadas composiciones de su pasado —enseñe el caso de *La asociación*— en una ocasión enteramente nueva. Y en esa vertiginosa, proyección hacia delante que sitúa el punto de fuga en el origen, resulta bien elocuente el grado en que afirma, a lo largo de toda la exposición, ese ingrediente generacional distintivo que el propio Pérez Villalta acorta en el ámbito que la psicodelia abra en el seno de la percepción. *

Terapia de grupo

Articubano actual.
Galería Fernando Pradilla.
Claudio Coello, 20, Madrid.
Hasta el 19 de marzo

FINES. CUATRO SE SOBRA y las expectativas generadas aquí y en Cuba por un artista tan largamente esperado, deseado, temido y aplaudido son sin duda el mejor marco posible para la realización de una exposición como *Terapia de grupo* y para la publicación de una antología de crítica y ensayos como *Nosotros, los más influidos*. Los dos acontecimientos son obviamente muy distintos entre sí pero los anima el hecho de que ambos se ocupan del mismo asunto, que es la situación actual del arte cubano. El arte de dentro y de fuera o, como prefiere llamarlo Andrés Isaac Sainza —el editor de la antología—, el arte de la isla y el arte de la diáspora. También coinciden en la clase de aproximación que toma la exposición contra el libro influido a dicho arte, a lo que bien cabe calificar como propia de esos "trifles" que, según Raúl Caballero, "descartan de los valores al futuro y de la serpiente porvenirista", que saben "que el hombre no es vago ni nuevo" y que, además, no se dejan intimidar porque sus adversarios políticos en la isla los descalifiquen por "dispersos, incoherentes, adolecentes". De hecho, César Pascual Castillo no ha dudado en dar curso libre en *Terapia de grupo* —la exposición que ha comisariado— al descratamiento y la heterogeneidad ética y estética que parecen ser los rasgos distintivos de la práctica artística de la Cuba de hoy. Incluso ha ido aún más lejos afirmando —en el ensayo de presentación— que "el arte cubano no existe", con

grupo" que ha interesado Castillo reuniendo en una sola muestra a tantos de sus artistas. Sobreyo apenas tres nombres destacados de la misma. El primero, el pintor cubano Alejandro González con sus lienzos, apuntemente papagayos, que en realidad son otros tantos cuestionamientos a los aspectos más declamados del socialismo cubano. El segundo, José Ángel Viramontes, con sus pinturas de una cohesión con los textos de piegas formalizadas en Cuba y en Miami. El protagonista del evento son las pinturas con inquietudes de Lindomar Plasencia, que funcionan como una curiosa advertencia de los riesgos de la copartura por desdoblamiento, tan hercúleo en la sociedad del espectáculo. **Carlos Álvarez**



Forma a destiempo por José Ismael, (2006) de John Isaacs.

John Isaacs

Gathering four
Galería Travesía Cuatro
Travesía de San Mateo, 4, Madrid.
Hasta el 25 de marzo

"AQUÍ, COGIDO POR LA... puede ser el comentario sarcástico de un artista que sobrevive desde su discreta alianza al devenir de la historia. Cogiendo polvo, *Gathering four*, es también el título —y la actitud— de la primera exposición individual en España de John Isaacs (Reino Unido, 1962), creador en la órbita de los Young British Artists (YBAs) desde su comienzo bajo una década. Cinco esculturas y 18 dibujos componen la parte central de esta muestra en la que Isaacs parece sustituir al ojo del espectador los pecados de la humanidad. En *Form a destiempo por José Ismael*... *Just Before that you are there* (2006), una escultura de una mano de bronce colocada en el suelo entre desafiante el dedo corazón, *sovereign sarcasm* de una diadema, de una revolución. En *Where is my soul?* (2006), una lámpara de formas amorfas contenida por una pantalla de pelo humano nos avisa de lo siniestro que puede llegar a ser muestra bésqueda de lo sublime. En cuanto a los dibujos y collages, Isaacs recurre a la repetición de una serie de metáforas que encierran cierta visión nihilista de la historia. La *corona de Plautus*, el *test de Rorschach* o la *catredal gótica*. Esta última, símbolo de lo que la humanidad es capaz de construir, aparece resquebrajada, cubierta de pintura negra u hallada por constructores vacíos como en *The empty temple* (2007). Por último, en-



Dibujo de José Pita, en la muestra Terapia de grupo.

la intención declarada de subrayar que la heterogeneidad irreducible de las obras de la veintena largo de artistas que ha reunido en su muestra dificulta enormemente el encasillamiento de las mismas en algo así como "el arte cubano". Y con el propósito de subrayar, asimismo, el grado de distancia —y desarraigo que afecta radicalmente a un conjunto de artistas en cuyas obras los rasgos identitarios cubanos resultan más o menos evidentes que un incontestable legado. Cuba ha de ser redefinida o reinventada inevitablemente y eso caben pocas dudas de que para resolver esa dura exigencia le haría bien adentrarse en la "terapia de

EXTRAVÍOS Cristal

Por Francisco Calvo Serraller

A PARTIR DE UNA afirmación de Kant sobre el comportamiento artístico de la naturaleza como tal, como cuando ésta produce, por ejemplo, "cristales" o "Bosques", por citar dos prototipos de lo mineral y lo orgánico. Simón Marchán Fiz, en su ensayo *La esencia del cristal en las artes y en la arquitectura* (Siruela), se embarca en una discusión erudita y crítica, no sólo acerca de la nomenclatura y el desarrollo del concepto de lo cristalino en el arte y la esotérica de nuestra época, sino, en última instancia, en cómo puede hallarse a través de ello una fundamentación científica para una disciplina técnica y una práctica, en principio, bastante refractaria al respecto. Repetidas veces en la materia, no voy a comentar las muchas excelencias condensadas en este breve y muy enjuiciado ensayo de Simón Marchán, entre las que seguiré diligentemente la pista a este tema desde Kant a Italo Calvino, desde el cristalógrafo René Just Haüy hasta los expertos en la difracción de Bragg o, en fin, desde Schrödinger y Yoëlle Le-Duc hasta la *Catedral de Cristal* de Philip Johnson, no es lo menor.

Pero lo que me interesa de este asunto aquí es la metáfora del cristal como, a su vez, metáfora de la transparencia, y la de ambos contra, nunca mejor dicho, reflejo de la paradójica opacificación del destino humano en nuestra tecnocrática era. En este sentido, una de las virtudes intelectuales de Marchán es que ha estudiado las réplicas que le salen a su radiante encuesta histórica, como las que plantearon irreflexivamente figuras de tanto peso como Paul Klee y Walter Benjamin, el primero de las ciudades, en pleno belicoso año 1915, no sólo habla de "cristales inquietos", sino que se refiere a la "interstición sanguínea". Llegando a decir que creyó morir, no sin preguntarse: "¿Acaso puedo morir, yo, el cristal?", o no sin afirmar que "cristales estructuras cristalinas contra las que a fin de cuentas nada puede una lava pastosa". El segundo, Benjamin, siempre empicado de forma tan ambivalente en relación con el instigable futuro histórico moderno, comenta, por su parte, en *Experiencia y pobreza*, que "no en vano el vidrio es un material duro y liso en el que nada se mantiene

firme. También es frío y sobrio. Las cosas de vidrio no tienen alma. El vidrio es el enemigo número uno del misterio. También es el enemigo de la posesión". Ni siquiera este último es para Benjamin en el mismo sentido, porque niega la peculiaridad del coleccionista de arte, que, en cierta manera, haciendo suyo un objeto lo retira del mercado, que es lo mismo que opacar su "publicidad".

Pero, a fin de cuentas, lo que tiene de relativamente malo lo tan prestigiosa transparencia es la totalitaria amorfación de la pervaciación o la desindividualización del hombre contemporáneo, el triunfo de lo mecánico sobre lo orgánico. La superación del haz sobre el error, o, en fin, la pérdida de sentido de lo que cuando no proyecta común. Quizá, por tanto, hubiera razón Hegel cuando advirtió que la total claridad acababa con el arte, que era un árbol verde de todos nuestros fantasmas, que son nuestro propio halo. No es éste el objeto de las disquisiciones de Simón Marchán, pero ¡qué gusto que no las obvie! *

una propuesta de alivio para la ansiedad vital, *Waking up!* (2006) ofrece bonitos dibujos colocados en una estructura de espiga. Es el estudio de biología, Isaac, el estudio del trascender de la historia desde ese escopetismo vital que acompaña a toda ciencia. Quizá por ello, el artista experimenta con el dibujo, la instalación, el video y la escritura, género, este último, en el cual la comparación con Duchamp tiene mucha evidencia. En *Gathering dust* se puede observar cómo el artista ha evolucionado de las formas más escondidas propias de los YEA—su cultura de hombres obesos desparpados por el sueño, brazos cruzados y suspiros—hacia experimentos más sutiles y líricos. Espigas frías y sin sangre como

serenos textos firmados, y de otros, su actitud decidida ante la vida. Hay quien está ahí porque rompió las convenciones y otros porque con ellos compartimos muchas cosas. Este santoral hacen es el que han querido mostrar Alonso Gil (Madrid, 1966) y Miguel Cabeza (Sevilla, 1979) y lo han concretado en sus grandes paneles que cubren los paredes de una galería en Triana, el viejo arsenal de la ciudad, fuera por tanto de los circuitos artísticos habitados. Cada uno de esos paneles intercala sus cuadros de 100 x 70 donde aparecen, tratados con diversas técnicas, Nietzsche, Marx, Artaud, Derrida, Camus, Jean Baudrillard, Ulrike Meinhof o Duchamp. Con ellos, personas cercanas a cada autor: uno de los hermanos de Cabeza, o Tschel, la mujer de Gil con su hijo. En los personajes más característicos, gruesas líneas rojas superpuestas recuerdan que están en un ring. Porque la muestra se concibe como un combate de boxeo entre los autores—cada uno hace valer sus referencias— y de cada uno de los personajes fueron luchadores que se arrojaron a embriagarse al mundo y decir algo nuevo (algo parecido hacen quienes comparten la vida con nosotros). La muestra es de hecho un trabajo site specific: convierte a la galería en un recinto reflexivo, un espacio entre lo público y lo privado. Las piezas, cuidadosamente elaboradas, tienen además la frescura de lo que se ha hecho con ganas. Hay en ellas algo de ejercicio apolítico: los imágenes son las de los libros o los periódicos, pero la ejecución tiene siempre un toque personal que las convierte en lo que realmente son: referencias vitales de un individuo. La única deficiencia de la muestra es su precariedad: a la vista de cómo simulan las figuras buen hacer y espontaneidad, cultura y vida individual, la exposición exige un libro de artista en el que a los veles retablos acompañaran las reflexiones que exploran su alcance y su sentido. Sería una buena forma de completar la idea. **Juan Bosco Díaz Urreola**



Seis autores, seis (2008), de Alonso Gil y Miguel Cabeza

el de las guerras posmodernas. La cruzada que queda se presenta en bloques, como si estuviera congelada. Como en *In search of someone to love*, *In search of someone to follow* (2006), un retrato de la vida pasada de Joseph Beuys. **Manuela Villa**

Alonso Gil (vs.) Miguel Cabeza

Solo autores seis
Galería Sufita
Febr. 14, Sevilla
Hasta el 15 de marzo

Allí donde se cruzan la inteligencia y el afecto hay, en cada uno de nosotros, un lugar donde se alojan las imágenes de héroes y magos que significan algo en nuestra vida. De algunos de esos personajes con-

LLAMADA EN ESPERA A la intemperie

Por Estrella de Diego

Soná porque las pantallas de cine vacías producen más tristeza que inspiración, o porque ese modelo que precede a la película en las viejas cines de vídeo, nueve fibrosa de 16 milímetros, genera en quienes miran el público a que el contenido se haya borrado para siempre y para siempre quede así suspendida la imagen. Será porque el granulado charriante recuerda a las noches más trágicas al lado del televisor, cuando la vida nos despertaba por sorpresa, sobresaltados entre el silencio—qué paradoja—, frente a una programación extinguida y unos aminorados caducos. Será porque el cine es uno de los pocos sitios reservados a las emociones en esta sociedad aburrida y desmaterializada. O será porque hoy memorias en los cuales el cansancio apaga los ojos y deja vía libre al resto de los sentidos, machos más o menos, pero aquella mañana notamos algo pasando: nosotrodes desordenado por el cuerpo, sin flexa; ganas de emocionarnos, aunque incluso la palabra sea móvil y escueta, igual que los sabores de los que había Proust.

En la improvisada sala de proyección una pantalla captaba la película sin imagen alguna, mientras el audio desvelaba una voz femenina que cantaba cierta canción popular repetida en burla, entrecantada y fragil. "La última canción de Daldosés, de John Huston".

La mujer en la sala no ha visto la película y muestra ilustrada las espaldas de sus acompañantes. "Se basaba en un relato de Laura Joyce. Los muertos. Es la canción que escuchó la protagonista en Navarra, mientras pasea por la calle con un marido y que le trae a la memoria a un amigo muerto".

La mujer observa la imagen indescifrable y se asombra de cómo se parecen todas las Nocturnas y las pérdidas y las montañas. No es necesario reconocer las canciones para percibir lo que la autora, la artista beltrana Susán Phillips, quiere transmitir a los visitantes. El video, uno de los sentidos más afectados en las comunicaciones, ha estado a jugar una buena partida. El salón de actos del Centro Galego de Arte Contemporáneo, el espacio familiar tantas veces habitado, tiene hoy salido a aspectos. Desde sobre todo una música formal. Andar por la vida tan

seguro, creyendo entender el mundo porque lo vemos, y hasta un minuto al lado para amararnos, fundándonos, desmembrarnos.

Fue era el pago que plantaban Janet Cardiff y George Burzúelos en una de sus más extraordinarias producciones. *The Paradise Machine*, a la cual los visitantes iban accediendo en grupos reducidos y cuyo patrón cinematográfico al fondo, enciclopedia, contrastaba con la voz delirante primero que desde los auriculares hablaba seductora y terrible, como un recordatorio.

Es un poder infinito el de los sentidos y las palabras, capaz de trasladarnos a otro tiempo y de hacer inoperantes proyectos espaciales: los cuartos vacíos se llenan y los que eran familiares se transforman en recién creados. La canción marrada de Phillips impone al visitante volúmenes escabridos, rápidos e invisibles.

El poder infinito de los sonidos y las palabras es capaz de trasladarnos a otro tiempo

que la artista va pasando en otros ritmos del edificio. En esto no hay simples pantallas oscuras donde desplazan los patrones: el espectador se encuentra inmerso a un vacío entrecogedor. A partir de aquí, las voces de las comunicaciones visuales que son en la cultura occidental una fórmula eficaz para superar las diferencias, se empezaron a re-narraciones nuevas. Al principio duró un poco de vértigo, apatía, porque dejar de ver se trata de otro mundo, una suerte de paño que esa desamparado en el filo de la edición que propone Lara Almaraz en una muestra más allá—gráfica coincidente en el Centro Galego para este pequeño río histórico—. Quedaba a la intemperie. Buen plan para el fin de semana —e incluso para el semana misma—. •

El románico
Cataluña, Toulouse y Pisa. 1120-1180
y el Mediterráneo

- Recreación en 3D de la portada de Santa María de Ripoll
- Espectáculo teatral de la compañía francesa *L'Arche de Noé* sobre el Maestro de Cabestany
- Conferencias, música y actividades infantiles
- Audioguía y visitas comentadas

29 febrero - 18 mayo 2008

Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya | Parque de Montjuïc | Barcelona | www.mnac.cat

El patrocinador es

Ministerio de Cultura y Patrimonio

Comunidad de Cataluña
Departament de Cultura i Mitjans de Comunicació

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE CULTURA Y PATRIMONIO

ARTE / EXPOSICIONES

John Isaacs

GATHERING DUST. - TRAVESIA CUATRO, Travesía de San Mateo, 4, MADRID. Hasta el 15 de marzo. De 2.300 a 26.000 €.

Enfrentarse a la primera individual española de John Isaacs (1968) es como ponerse ante un enigma: del arte, de la naturaleza y de la Historia. Sus obras poseen una rara energía que irrumpe desde la extrañeza o la paradoja plástica, desde una ironía nada postmoderna, o bien a partir del rigor pesimista, hasta tocar cierta membrana espiritual prendida con alfileres a la mente de atrás, a nuestra memoria perdida, a la fe que se propaga en cada uno de los actos que cometemos a diario y que se pierde en cada uno de los desastres del mundo de los hombres. Un modo extraño de introducirlos, de acuerdo, pero no resulta fácil hablar de otro modo de obras así. Isaacs aventura una maraña de sentidos, de referencias a la Historia y al presente, y también una reflexión acerca de la razón de ser de la construcción del artefacto artístico y de la misma Historia del Arte. En cierto modo su especialidad es darle la vuelta a las cosas y a su facultad... pero varias veces. Así, trae la *Silla cubierta de grasa* de Beuys y la remeda transformando la grasa sanadora en un pedazo de carne simulado con cera. O crea una hipnótica lámpara cuya base de cerámica simula unos árboles cortados y su pantalla está hecha de negros cabellos humanos. Lo grotesco, el desvío y la magia de la transformación de la materia se dan la mano ante los espíritus de Fillou, Duchamp y Goya en un aquelarre en que se mezclan todos los recursos plásticos, técnicas, soportes conducidos por un autodidactismo genial. Isaacs propone un temblor, una sacudida. Inventa fetiches como los de los hombres primitivos pero sin una pizca de inocencia, ni de bondad gratuita. La bondad hay que ganársela, parece decir. La fe hay que ganársela. El de Lancaster podría ser un fanático virtuoso pero su fama conseguiría que creamos en la connotación. **ABEL H. POZUELO**



J. ISAACS. FROM A DISTANCE YOU LOOK SMALLER... BUT I KNOW THAT YOU ARE THERE. 2008

el caso adivinado en su interior. En el tríptico *Dynear sur l' béton armé*, la estampa parece la opuesta: obreros dispersos en el interior de un gran edificio limpio de escombros, descansan o comen. La tensión entre el desorden de lo real y cierto orden plás-

tico, organización que atrae al misterio, se dan en estas dos obras, sobre todo cuando se contemplan juntas. Pero si llama la atención esta quinta individual de Vega Borrego es porque en ella encontramos un hasta ahora inédito trabajo escultórico de construcción de la imagen mediante teselas conformado al modo de un pixelado digital. En las series *Obé, Lucky You* y *Obé, Lucky You Me* encontramos varios retratos de personajes compuestos con dados de diferentes colores. Unos, protagonistas de cierto suceso luctuoso acontecido en Toronto. Otro, el del mismo artista caracterizado como El Solitario. En ellas atrapa algo siniestro, incómodo y misterioso, que tiene sin duda origen en la manipulación de la composición de la forma, de la imagen, del sentido. **A. H. P.**

André Guedes

LA VISITA DE LA CIUDAD. - GALERÍA TRINTA, Vireu da Gercá, 24, SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA. Hasta el 10 de marzo. De 1.500 a 15.000 €.



VEGA BORREGO. OHN LUCKY ME. 2008

En sus trabajos, André Guedes (Lisboa, 1971) deja patente el tiempo interior de las obras, el espacio entre las cosas que nos permite pensar el acontecimiento, valorar la experiencia de la recepción. Más que acciones, André Guedes propone situaciones o quiebros capaces de fracturar nuestra memoria, el significado que le otorgamos a un determinado lugar o momento y, en definitiva, toda la tensión que se produce cuando algo resulta dislocado de un espacio para otro. El suyo es algo así como un arte en tránsito, capaz de enfatizar un devenir. En la galería Trinta presenta toda la documentación y puesta en escena de su proyecto *La visita de Euginio* fruto de su participación anterior en la exposición *La ciudad interpretada*, afortunado conjunto de intervenciones urbanas comisariado por Pablo Fanego para Santiago de Compostela en 2006. En ésta propuso que un monumento de Mariano Benlliure -en memoria de Eugenio Montero Ríos- volviese a su lugar original en la Plaza del Obradoiro de donde había sido trasladado hasta su lugar actual en 1920. Aquel traslado supuso un debate social en su momento y ahora Guedes lo transporta a un debate más silencioso, de política interna, como muestran los e-mails privados del proceso de formalización de la pieza que Guedes torna públicos en una galería privada. En el fondo, toda la obra de Guedes es un archivo

de momentos, donde el espectador toma conciencia de su condición y repiensa su papel e inserción en un determinado contexto. La relación de la obra con las instituciones de la ciudad, el antes y el después del acontecimiento, los espectadores -voluntarios e involuntarios- convertidos en actores, la reconstrucción histórica de un lugar... Todos participan de una misma situación que siempre nace de la fisura íntica, de la interrupción de toda expectativa. **DAVID BARRO**

Daniel Vega Borrego

ENTRAÑABLE. - GALERÍA COPYFOTO, Ruscá, 23, MADRID. Hasta el 6 de marzo. De 400 a 7.500 €.

El encuentro de origen azaroso con perspectivas singulares desde las que avistar lo cotidiano, ya sea el paisaje urbano y sus edificaciones, la noción orgánica del cuerpo humano o aspectos emocionales comunes a todos, se perfila como motor de la labor de Daniel Vega Borrego (Madrid, 1977). Su trayectoria, como pudo verse en *Formación Nüsslé*, serie con que logró en 2004 el IV premio de Fotografía El Cultural, se ha caracterizado por la práctica y exploración de la fotografía y su sutil manipulación digital. Las obras recientes de *Entañable* reúnen y responden a tales señas. Así, en *Aftermarket* organiza en concienzudo ensamblaje numerosas fotografías de la fachada de un gran edificio tomadas durante su reforma, subrayando el acabado arquitectónico en contraste con



A. GUEDES. LA VISITA DE LA CIUDAD. 2008



JOHN ISAACS, ARTISTA

«LO DE LA MIRADA CONTEMPORÁNEA ES UN MITO»

LA PRIMERA EXPOSICIÓN EN ESPAÑA DEL BRITÁNICO JOHN ISAACS. EN LA GALERÍA TRAVESÍA CUATRO, DE MADRID, ES UN DISPARO DIRECTO A NUESTRAS CONCIENCIAS Y A NUESTRA CONCEPCIÓN DE LO TEMPORAL: COMO PRODUCTO DE RÁPIDO CONSUMO

JAVIER DÍAZ-GUARDOLA
Gathering Dust, o lo que es lo mismo, acumular polvos. Nada es inmutable y, a la vez, todo es susceptible de convertirse en Historia, de ahí la responsabilidad que se les exige a todos nuestros actos. De todo esto se ocupa la obra de John Isaacs (Reino Unido, 1965). Su primera individual en Madrid, en Travesía Cuatro, toda una lección de intrahistoria.

¿Qué imagen es la que quería ofrecer con esta selección para su primera individual española?

Cada exposición es diferente: dependiendo del estado de ánimo, la energía, el espacio, y de lo que me interesa en el momento de producir las obras, aunque al final, pienso que la corriente esculta sigue siendo la misma. Con este conjunto esperaba

presentar un grupo de obras diversas, que, una vez instaladas en la galería, pudieran, mediante sus diálogos interactivos y sus referencias cruzadas, crear un espacio con carga emotiva que se mueva en el tiempo. Una arqueología emocional y temporal en la que participar. Definitivamente, cuando terminé el montaje, tuve la maravillosa sensación de que yo ya no estaba en las obras. Es la primera exposición que me ha hecho sentir empujados, que las obras existen en este tiempo, sostenidas por sí mismas y sin pedir ayuda.

Sus títulos son muy expresivos. También el de esta cita. ¿De qué manera los emplea como resacas dirigidos a la memoria?

Los títulos siempre dan una clave, una especie de entrada en un diálogo

con la obra. Es necesario que sean expresivos o emotivos cuando las piezas parecen extrañas o brutales. Son importantes para mí porque actúan como una especie de diario emocional que registra parte del lugar en el que me encontraba en el momento de hacer las obras. A veces los reutilizo para piezas realizadas con años de diferencia, de modo que en el futuro exista un rastro que permita relacionar entre sí grupos de objetos diferentes. El título para Travesía Cuatro es un modo de mirar las obras, de decir que todos vamos acumulando polvo, que no existe nada que pertenezca sólo a este momento, y de intentar tomar al espectador de la mano y guiarlo por una experiencia de viaje en el tiempo.

Hablando de memoria, ¿cómo se

debe leer desde la contemporaneidad el paso del tiempo?

Todo lo que se hace en este momento es por definición contemporáneo, por lo que el término desaparece. Creo que el «punto de vista contemporáneo» es un mito. Lo que a las personas les preocupa es la noción moderna de «vanguardia», relacionada con la originalidad, que ahora no existe en arte. Esto no quiere decir que no haya cosas nuevas, o que las reinterpretaciones no sean necesarias, sino que se hace demasiado hastagapi en algo nuevo, hasta el punto de que olvidamos aspectos esenciales de nuestra propia historia y evolución. Parte del gran arte histórico se hizo para su tiempo, y buena parte se hizo antes de su tiempo. Yo realizo mis obras en diálogo con los antiguos y en perso-

ARTICULO



aunque los modos de vida cambian, las necesidades y los deseos básicos siguen siendo los mismos, y esto es lo inmutable. A menudo miro la realidad de nuestra evolución, aunque no en un sentido genético darwinista, sino nuestra evolución emocional, las consecuencias de las acciones y sus reacciones, tanto a escala personal como de una sociedad.

¿Lo que usted emplea en su obra es humor o puro cinismo?

Si alguien escribe un poema, se nos dice que tomemos estas palabras más en serio que las de una novela. Estamos culturalmente condicionados para ver las cosas, y es cierto que al entrar en una galería se espera que miremos arte. Sin embargo, ese día habremos mirado muchas obras cosas sin prestarles tanta atención. Yo uso el humor para romper de manera constructiva esa respuesta condicionada al arte. El cinismo se malinterpreta. En el fondo, yo no soy cínico; me considero un soñador romántico, pero a veces hace falta mostrar algo brutal para enseñar lo opuesto. Para bien o para mal, el público añanza ciertas cosas sobre otras en cuanto a supremacía cultural, pero yo puedo ocultar algo muy profundo detrás del humor o el cinismo.

El concepto de utopía flota aquí en el ambiente. ¿Su trabajo nace de la constatación de su imposibilidad o es su materialización la que le lleva a esa conclusión?

El concepto de utopía está para mí ligado al amor: es este sueño el que mantiene el corazón en marcha. Tengo una gran sensación de nostalgia por la utopía, pero tal vez eso se deba a que no tengo religión. Cuando es bueno, mi trabajo habita el espacio entre mis sueños y los de otras personas. Mi idea de la utopía es una protesta en la que las palabras así y así no existan. Imagínese una enorme protesta, las calles llenas de gente llevada pancartas con las palabras «¿Quizá o ¿No sé». Por supuesto es imposible, y por qué iba a ocurrir. Sueño con que el tiempo vaya más lento, con una especie de debate mental en el que, al igual que los antiguos atenienses debatían sobre leyes, las personas se ocupan sobre si se permite hacer una idea.

Si repasamos su trayectoria, es como si hubiera empezado a trabajar como artista casi pensando como un científico.

Yo era científico, o al menos estudiaba para ello. Hasta que dejé la universidad para estudiar arte, había creído con la ciencia como profesión y al arte como algo fácil y divertido. No me parecía un trabajo. En los primeros años hice muchas obras que eran un cuestionamiento directo de la ciencia y también del arte, mientras trataba de encontrar un modo de entrar en él. Fue un cambio de dirección tal que su impacto duró muchos años. Me ha llevado tiempo entender la función de la creación artística en mi vida y ahora puedo responder sin dudar que soy un artista. Me ha apartado de la crítica que hacía a la ciencia, aunque los sentimientos siguen estando ahí. ■

nas del futuro. Como restos de este tiempo, siempre serán contemporáneos, aunque espero que puedan borrar sus límites. Esto es importante, porque, al final, si no accedemos a la historia estamos destinados a dar vueltas en círculo. Todos existimos en un tiempo y en un lugar relativos y diferentes entre sí. El arte debería aspirar a arrojar algo más de luz sobre nuestras similitudes, y no sobre nuestras diferencias.

Proyectos como «Desde la distancia parecen más pequeños recuerdan a antiguos monumentos abatidos. ¿Es inevitable que el artista hable de política?

La política tampoco es algo que sólo lo practiquen los políticos. Todos lo hacemos. Forma parte de la existencia humana. Una galería no es lugar para la propaganda política. El título de esta escultura la aleja, espero, de un mero retrato directo de Bush. Sin embargo, en ella hay por supuesto referencias a monumentos públicos hechos de bronce que, por lo general, son de líderes o supuestos grandes hombres. Supongo que la mano debe representar a este votante. Y es irónico que no pudiera ser de la estatua de un desconocido. Pero como título su título, lo que representa no es un

punto final en el tiempo, el proceso continúa: los nuevos líderes se erigen estatuas a sí mismos. Es normal. **Otras obras hacen alusión a nuestros íconos culturales y su consumo. ¿Existe hoy algo inmutable?** Estamos rodeados por lo que nuestra sociedad nos ofrece. Nuestra opción está en aceptarlo o no. Yo crecí en Londres durante la Guerra Fría, viéndolo con el temor a la bomba atómica. Si hubiera vivido en la Edad Media, habría tenido otros temores de naturaleza similar; además de caminar con una noria en la nariz para protegernos de la peste. Ahora se nos habla de sida y de terroristas. Los íconos se convierten en estereotipos, y éstos son la raíz de nuestro pensamiento, por lo que es inevitable que los artistas los traten. Sin embargo,

«EN EL FONDO, YO NO SOY CÍNICO; ME CONSIDERO UN SOÑADOR ROMÁNTICO, PERO A VECES HACE FALTA MOSTRAR ALGO BRUTAL PARA OFRECER ALGO LO OPUESTO»

Las heridas de la cultura

JOHN ISAACS
GATHERING DUST
GALERÍA TRAVESIA CUATRO, MADRID
TRAVESIA DE SAN MARTÍN 4
HASTA EL 31 DE MARZO

JAVIER RUBIO NOBLEOT
Claro está que al principio fue *Young British Artists*, en la Saatchi (1996). A la tradicionalmente escéptica España estos artistas empezaron a llegar algo más tarde y ahora, aquello queda ya lejos: doce años después, John Isaacs (1962, afincado en Berlín) ostenta su primera individual aquí y participa en la colectiva *Gathering in the Artium*. A Madrid ha traído media docena de esculturas y un espléndido conjunto de dibujos que ejemplifican la característica lectura panemica que él hace de los restos de lo sublime romántico y de lo ominoso o siniestro en la era del papel amarillento -aunque tal vez él diría que todo es papel mojado. Lo que nunca quedó claro es si Isaacs es optimista y sensible o nihilista y ganso: él se rebela contra el «fundamentalismo intelectual» y tanto la *intelectualidad* como la fuerza que destruye sus esculturas confirman que cree en el artista; pero, al tiempo, la mirada que posa sobre la cultura, la tradición y aun la emoción, no es precisamente alegre. Desde la distancia parece más lejano, pero si que está ahí, acaso la obra central de la muestra, es una gigantesca mano de bronce cuyo dedo mayor podemos introducir allí por donde nos quepa, y es tan inevitable pensar en la cantidad de estatuas derribadas a lo largo y ancho del planeta en los últimos años -el fin del monumento como tal- como aceptar la plena vigencia de cuanto tales símbolos representaron. Un cubo de Rubik cónico, un trozo de carne sobre la *Silla giratoria de Beuys*, la pantalla de pelo humano de una lámpara, unas cadenas que actúan como contrapeso, botellas de licor medio vacías... Ayer leía un ensayo dedicado a la desaparición de la figura del crítico -introducción a la categoría de melior- y su sustitución por la del asesor. Se me ocurre que estas primeras disposiciones de un joven artista extranjero, escueltas, sin catálogo parecen hechas a la medida del círculo y de los afortunados coleccionistas que, gracias a él, conocen el valor futuro de las obras que adquieren. No así su significado, que les sería desajustado a los visitantes comunes (y sólo a ellos, puesto que los coleccionistas, al pensar, ya no leen este tipo de artículos) por unos cronistas que, a la vista del comportamiento cada vez más extraño de los galeristas, tal vez debieran renunciar incluso a reivindicar el valor inmenso de lo absurdo y grotesco -una categoría estética poco estudiada aún-, lo negro y morbido, de lo repulsivo y de todo cuanto here secretamente. ■

John Isaacs

VTO, London, UK

BY SALLY O'REILLY IN REVIEWS | 09 SEP 02



John Isaacs has a very shifty relationship to subject matter. Folding science into popular culture and mixing the idealized with raw fact, he flirts with phenomena that never quite materialize as distinct references. He grasps the evocativeness of cinematic language and plunders many genres; you can identify devices from sci-fi, romance, kitchen sink, thrillers and Magic Realism.

These references are not left intact but bowdlerized, converged and respun into intangible, liminal narratives.

The installation *Voices from the Id* (all works 2002) at Beaconsfield was a domestic scene that dissolved into a cave interior, or vice versa. Outside, the structure was makeshift and raw, as you imagine the back of fake shop-fronts in a Western would be. Enter the structure, stepping over rocks and around stalactites, or simply look through the large picture windows, and the rock gave way to a slob's paradise of televisions and loafing debris. The room was full of kitsch ornaments - an Eiffel Tower, a skull and a religious snowstorm - next to staple guns, beer cans and overflowing ashtrays. It suggested a student's bedroom or a series of lazy contingency measures. You wondered if this retreat to the caves would be an advanced or retrogressive existence, an environmentally informed choice or a post-Holocaust necessity. There are novels set in this sort of place.

The televisions churned out daytime TV confessional programmes, their stereotypical audiences exaggerated as martyrs or monsters. One caption reads, 'Devin wants to know why her mother jumped out of a burning building and left her behind'. Frequently berated as a perversion of psychotherapy by ratings chasers, these programmes are not a great subject matter for art: we all know that they're exploitative, and so the debate feels like a dead end. This nonchalance about originality is what is slippery about Isaacs' work: his stubborn refusal to avoid clichés. He builds places that create an over-familiar yet untenable effect - an epistemological déjà vu of a déjà vu.

Meanwhile, across London at VTO Gallery, Isaacs' work sank further into fantasy. The installation in the back gallery *On Your Knees* commanded you to kneel and squint through a tiny peephole. The view of a mannequin's legs, from toes to knees, is a snippet of a diorama that will never be fully revealed. And yet, within this slimmest of narrative clues there are anomalies rich enough to arouse interest. The loose earth implies rural surroundings, while our experience of museum display prompts us towards prehistoric allusions. But the smooth legs and the buffed red toenails indicate that this is a self-conscious urbanite off their turf, a contextual shipwreck or a walking anachronism.

In the main gallery a magical atmosphere was achieved by openly contrived means. In the middle of the room an island, presented at waist height like a model train set, glowed in the low lighting. A pool of smoking water gave out a musical trickle, while beneath the plastic rocks a mechanism from an old fake coal fire brought the volcanic atoll to illuminated life. Sci-fi, fibre-optic plants thrived round the shoreline with a plasma ball guttering in their midst. Projected on the wall in front of the landscape, a video of a murky pond and unkempt foliage slowly revealed the blinking eyes of a half-submerged face. The narratives bifurcate: a soldier in Vietnam or a primitive creature emerging from the swamp? A second video showed an expanse of undulating ocean with a voice-over of a woman recounting in Russian, and in surprising detail, a dream in which she lived in the sea among the fish. A series of pseudo-psychoanalytical links led her to the conclusion that we are all beyond evolution and embody our own cosmos, and that 'people pass through life like dumb planets, inconceivably directed by uncontrollable forces'. The text is full of contradictions, but then that's the nature of dreams and the philosophizing of the layperson. That recounting dreams is a social no-no is generally acknowledged, but once again Isaacs doesn't sidestep such assumptions.

Man-made and electrically powered, this was a Star Trek set of domestic proportions and universal intentions. The title of this installation, *Dumb Planets Are Round Too*, imposed personal qualities on to a scientific entity. Like *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* (1975) or *The Little Prince* (1943) - short novels that are difficult to categorize - it melded Surrealism with magic and morality to build a personal mythology.