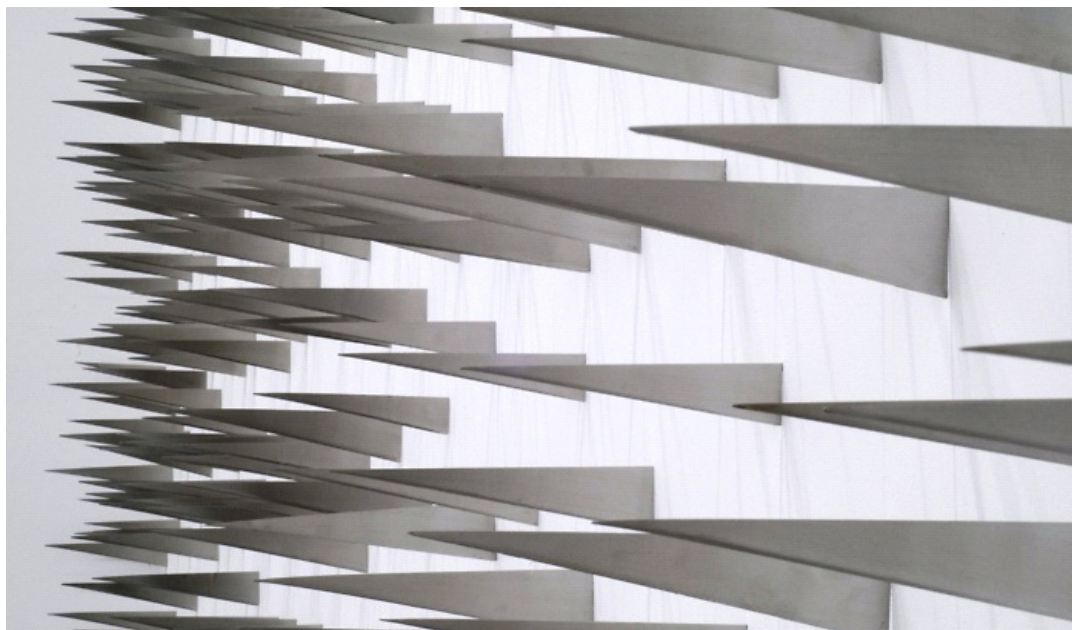


NOT VITAL

NEW SCULPTURES

PARIS DEBELLEYME

15 Jan 2005 - 23 Feb 2005



Not Vital is one of the most important sculptors of his generation. Originally Swiss, he was born in Sent in 1948. Shown today throughout the world, the Ropac gallery has been representing him in France for more than 10 years and is delighted to present his latest work.

It is not easy to sum up a body of work that does not adhere to the norm. This could well be the most pointed characteristic of this paradoxical artist: to dwell on the fringes in order to somehow also be more on the inside. His personal experiences, his many travels, throughout the world – his varied production sites – and his many studios, equally diverse, located in New York, Italy, Niger and of course Switzerland – have enabled him to create works stemming from natural or simple elements, that become dramatic and original installations.

One such installation consists of a wall of knives: unique to this particular space, the knife blades of different sizes surge from the wall. This is a meeting, both poetic and violent between a pierced raw space, and objects with many potential meanings; from the emblematic Swiss army knives to the erotic blades of surrealist works, one can see that the references are vast. The effect is troubling, and disconcerting, clearly the artist's goal. A metamorphosis of our preconceived notions by the creating a free flow of new associations : a sculpture of thought.

Other work presented : 15 ceramic spheres of similar shape, fabricated by Nigerian craftsmen. On the inside of these closed earthen bowls: an entire dead camel, cut up and divided among them.

The artist often enlists help from local talent: for him travel is not a meaningless pilgrimage or simply an exotic look at different universes, it must be a shared experience. A joining of skills to create a work that rests on the notion of burial, of the hidden. A somehow non-seen sculpture. The idea of a sculpture as sculpture. One loses one's bearings.

Then there are the works that seem more closely linked to the Swiss landscape: blocs of black marble. They seem freshly extracted from the mountain, they are rough and raw in their strong rectangular shape : tears can be found sculpted in the hollows. The title is explicit : "1000 Tears ". Every single tear is there ; irregular, carved by hand, tiny symbols of the art of sculpting. Are we weeping for this "form to be" – the sculpture – or is it the premise of this "form to be" that participates in those feelings already ? Obviously, the artist does not give us the answer.

And so the work of Not Vital is poised in a peculiar and powerful place, at once on the sidelines and in the heart of sculpture, a paradox of strength and poetry – if that word is not overused.– The simplicity and the power of a question mark.