

TOM SACHS

BARBIE SLAVE SHIP

SALZBURG HALLE

12 Apr 2014 - 28 Aug 2014



As part of the "American Summer", Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is holding a solo exhibition of sculptures by Tom Sachs in the HALLE. The main work shown is the monumental *Barbie Slave Ship*, which was on display from September 2013 until January 2014 in the Church of Saint Just, at the twelfth Biennale in Lyon.

The five-metre-long three-master with pink sails, some 100 working cannon, its own bar, working sound system and 300-strong crew of Barbies, is an ironic replica of the famous 18th-century ship *Victory* which, under the British flag, carried merchandise and slaves from Africa to North America.

The meticulously worked hull consists of cardboard packaging, plywood, paste, and found objects re-interpreted by being used in unexpected ways. The transformation and alienation of objects is an important conceptual component of Sachs's oeuvre, together with the study and demonstration of technical production processes, which always remain undisguised in his sculptures.

Concealed in the belly of the ship, besides the whole technical equipment, is the costly, astounding cargo: 300 stark-naked Barbie dolls lying chained together in rows. On the arm of each of these blonde slave-dolls is a code number, with which every passenger is identified by name on a wall-work entitled *Victory (General Arrangement)*, the ship's log-book. These include heroines and divas of yesterday and today from show business, comic-strip characters and women from the artist's milieu. All the tools and cannon bear male names or company names, so that Sachs gives individual faces to these "players in the closed universe of his ship", making them equally perpetrators and victims.

This sculpture is not only a humorous reference to the history of the slave trade between Africa and America – it also shows how our society is becoming enslaved; we could be seen as slaves of consumer society, of advertising in general, of an exaggerated ideal of beauty and of avid curiosity for news of glamorous stars.

Tom Sachs (b 1966) lives in New York. He studied at the Architectural Association in London in 1987 and graduated from Bennington College, Vermont, in 1989. His work has been shown in many exhibitions in Europe and the USA, including the recent Lyon Biennale. Further solo exhibitions: *Space Program: Mars* in the Park Avenue Armory /New York (2012), *Tom Sachs: Bronze Collection* in Lever House/New York (2008), *Logjam* in Des Moines Art Center/Iowa (2007), Fondazione Prada/Milan, *Tom Sachs - Survey: America, Modernism, Fashion* in Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst/Oslo (2006) and *NUTSY's* in the Deutsche Guggenheim Museum/Berlin (2003). His works are also represented in many collections, including: Centre Georges Pompidou/Paris, Metropolitan Museum of Art/New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum/New York, Whitney Museum of American Art/New York and Museum of Modern Art/San Francisco.