

DONALD BAECHLER

BRONZE HEADS AND COLLAGES

PARIS DEBELLEYME

31 May 2012 - 30 Jun 2012



Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is delighted to present a selection of the most recent works by American artist Donald Baechler including a series of collages alongside bronze sculptures.

The heads and silhouettes have had a particular and recurring importance in his work since the various collages made of accumulations (*crowd paintings*) that he produced in the 90's. His style evocative of the American comic books, graffiti art and tribal art results from the insatiable curiosity of the artist for the images that he keeps collecting tirelessly. Nevertheless some of the faces emphasize a child's world without referring to specific memories. In the same way, the "Heads" series conjures up with distance and humour the sculpted bust genre. The treatment of the facial volumes, which can be perceived as crude and burlesque at first sight, is a parody of the desperate quest, embodied in the great tradition of pictorial realism, to anchor the individual in eternity. Unlike a Daumier who used the art of caricature in order to discriminate, Baechler takes Art itself as a subject and accentuates its specificities.

Baechler's work by expressing an assertive naivety that, precisely because it seems false, staggers both the object and the subject; the work reveals itself as inevitably abstract. The minimalism of the forms and volumes, in the treatment of his paintings and sculptures contours, is strong enough to avoid superficial discussion towards them and permit to attain their essence. The themes which may appear simplistic at first, synthesise all the qualities expected of a work of art to express issues as diverse as the essence of art and its history, childhood, the fetishism induced in the work of art seen as an object, nostalgia and the complexity of the contemporary era.

By using black he accentuates the powerful and robust structure of his paintings and sculptures. The execution process doesn't seek for perfection in the painter's gesture or in the rendition of volumes, his work is not intended to be naturalist or perfect. However, his works bear the traces of a moving and ongoing process. That is precisely the appeal of using collage, as assemblage of childhood memories, due to its blurred but also resurgent and haunting nature, as memories whose outlines are not precisely shaped yet present and impossible to hide.

Donald Baechler was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1956. His works were revealed to the public in the 80's and are exhibited in the most prestigious collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.