
TONY CRAGG

NEW SCULPTURES

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

14 Apr 2011 - 04 Jun 2011



We are pleased to announce our fifth exhibition of works by the British sculptor Tony Cragg (*1949). This is the artist's first solo exhibition in our Salzburg gallery.

Tony Cragg is one of the most distinguished contemporary sculptors. Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is showing 20 new sculptures of steel, bronze and wood, to coincide with two major museum exhibitions: in the Cour Marly, the Cour Puget and in I. M. Pei's glass pyramid at the Paris Louvre, eleven new sculptures under the title Figure Out - Figure In are currently on show, juxtaposed with the monumental 17th- 18th- and 19th-century French sculptures. This exhibition is to run until autumn of this year. Concurrently, the Küppersmühle Museum in Duisburg is showing the major Cragg retrospective Dinge im Kopf, Things on the Mind until 13 June.

Cragg's sculptural oeuvre was originally motivated by his study of English Land Art and Performance, and is still distinguished by a immense wealth of surprising formal inventions and combinations. Cragg sees himself as a materialist, constantly seeking to explore and expand new materials. Stacking, layering and heaping have always been strategies in which he takes diverse existing materials and everyday objects, and gives them an unexpected interpretation. Here it is primarily steel, bronze and wood that he uses for his almost geologically layered arrangements.

In recent years, heads and faces have been appearing like leitmotifs in Cragg's work. A morphing circular movement shapes the rhythm of the sculptures. Overlapping, layering and convolution give rise to body landscapes forming positives and negatives, asserting a form and at the same time mapping out their vacant spaces. Cragg develops his forms from "artistic sediments that appear to arise from different time zones" (Eva Maria Stadler, 2008). Recurring forms are stacked into surrealistic totem-like pillars. The horizontal extension of the biomorphic form is reminiscent of futurist Italian speed freaks like Umberto Boccioni and Giacomo Balla, while the verticality of his pillar-like sculptures brings to mind Constantin Brancusi, who similarly "arrived at a reduction of the natural form through his abstract formal language" (Michael Krapf, 2008). Nature with all its structures, from micro to macro, is the dominant theme of Tony Cragg's works over the past ten years.

Cragg "starts from a transoptic, imaginary view. He enlarges structures and objects, blending the view through the microscope with the measure of the world. The change in dimension reacts against the usual forms, thus eliminating any idea of function" (Werner Spies, 2011).

Tony Cragg was born in Liverpool in 1949 and has lived in Wuppertal since 1977. He began his studies at the Gloucestershire College of Art and Design, then attended the painting class at the Wimbledon School of Art, before changing his course to the Royal College of Art in London in 1973. Since the 1980s his work has been represented at many important international exhibitions, including documenta 7 and 8 in Kassel (1982 and 1987), São Paulo Biennial (1983) and Venice Biennale (1993 and 1997). In 1988 he was awarded the Turner Prize, and in 1992 he was made a Chevalier des Arts et Lettres. From 1979 he taught at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, where he became professor in 1988, and in 2001 he was appointed Professor of Sculpture at the Berlin Academy of Arts. Since 1994 he has been a member of the Royal Academy of Arts, London, and since 2002 a member of the Academy of Arts, Berlin; that same year he was elevated to the status of Commander of the British Empire (CBE). In 2007, Tony Cragg received what is probably the most prestigious art prize in the world, the Praemium Imperiale. In 2009 he succeeded Markus Lüpertz as Rector of the Düsseldorf Academy of Art. São Paulo Chevaliers des Arts et Lettres

During the 1980s, solo exhibitions of his work were increasingly held in important institutions such as the Kunsthalle Bern (1983), Louisiana Museum Humlebæk (1984), Brooklyn Museum, New York (1988), North Rhine-Westphalia Art Collection (1989), Art Institute of Chicago (1990), Reina Sofia, Madrid (1995), Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal (1999), Tate Gallery, Liverpool (2000), Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn (2003), Neues Museum, Nuremberg (2005), Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg (2007), Belvedere, Vienna (2008), Staatlichen Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe and Salzburg Museum of Modern Art (2009).

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