



OSCAR TUAZON. That's Not Made for That

Exhibition dates: 10.07.09 – 19.09.09

Writer, publisher and curator, Oscar Tuazon is above all one of the most captivating and radical sculptors of his generation. Tuazon's practice is characterised by a form of contemporary sculpture bricolage, which recalls Arte Povera in its inventive use of natural and industrial materials. References to minimalism and artists such as Richard Serra or Sol LeWitt can be found in the formal structure and positioning of his sculptures and installations.

Tuazon's use of raw materials infuses his work with an energy and tension, which sets him firmly within the lineage of Gordon Matta-Clark and Robert Smithson. However, the way he considers this heritage draws upon concepts prevalent in contemporary culture, such as ideas of collapse and ruin, recycling and reforming.

For his project at The David Roberts Art Foundation, Tuazon was asked to challenge the space. He creates a new body of site-specific sculptures, working with marble for the first time and using works from the David Roberts Collection. Using materials in new and unexpected ways he questions the gallery's architecture and the public's interaction with it.

Tuazon's starting point for this exhibition was the desire to create an autonomous artwork. *"Starting with a kind of abstraction and pushing it towards function. Take something and use it, misuse it. So the autonomous work of art wouldn't necessarily tend towards emptiness, negation, blankness—but towards function. This 'abstract function' is a more straight-forward, literal idea of autonomy than Ad Reinhardt would have it: it is simply a self-contained artwork, something that can stand on its own. An object, actually, that doesn't need any kind of support structure. It doesn't need a wall, it doesn't need lights, it doesn't even need to be displayed inside. It's just a thing. It can be left outside, left alone. It doesn't even need to be looked at. And so it remains stubbornly abstract. Abstract in the sense that it doesn't need anyone. It can function on its own, but the only function the object is capable of performing is that of an artwork, useless and inexplicable. To put it another way, the work is onanistic."*

The exhibition is curated by Vincent Honoré, Artistic Director of the David Roberts Art Foundation in collaboration with Sandra Pusterhofer, Assistant Curator. The Foundation would like to thank Daniele Balice and Alexander Hertling for their assistance in the preparation of the exhibition and the production of the works.

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The exhibition

TO ROLL, TO CREASE, TO FOLD, TO STORE, TO BEND, TO SHORTEN, TO TWIST, TO DAPPLE, TO CRUMPLE, TO SHAVE, TO TEAR, TO CHIP, TO SPLIT, TO CUT, TO SEVER, TO DROP, TO REMOVE, TO SIMPLIFY, TO DIFFER, TO DISARRANGE, TO OPEN, TO MIX, TO SPLASH, TO KNOT, TO SPILL...¹

Oscar Tuazon has explored living structures and how they define and frame human life in works such as *Coming Soon*, 2002, *City Without a Ghetto*, 2003 or *Locked Room*, 2004. His work has often been analysed through notions of (utopian) architecture, habitat, and use. However, his practice has as much been inspired by notion of resistance to them: how the architecture can be changed, altered or negated through the use of uncommon forms and materials. His installation *Kodiak*, created with Eli Hansen for the Seattle Museum of Art in 2008, is exemplary: he uses a staircase that he turns into a monumental sculpture, an abstract and dynamic form.

For his exhibition at the David Roberts Art Foundation, Tuazon goes one step further: he totally engages with post-minimal sculptures. The works he created all adopt primary geometric forms (cubes, columns, etc). He makes creative use of a wide range of materials (wood, concrete, steel, and for the first time, marble) and explores the tensions created by their juxtaposition.

“One of the first things I did when I started working in New York was to write down a list of verbs – to splash, to tear, to roll, to cut, and so on. I then enacted those verbs in the studio with rubber and lead in relation to time and place. The residues of the activities didn’t always qualify as art. I was primarily interested in the process and it was important that whatever was finally made reveal its making. Some of the residues were so replete in their exploration of material and the simplicity and singularity of the process that they would go unquestioned.”² The practice of Richard Serra, together with others by minimal or post-minimal sculptors such as Sol LeWitt or Tony Smith, had infused the exhibition: the works are partly generated by the inner property of their materials, they have basic forms, their proportions make them neither an object nor a monument, they are made of industrial materials, etc.

The sculptures have been positioned in the space to create a rhythm and engage with the visitor’s body as much as with the surrounding architecture and its luminosity. The artist has chosen to include works from the David Roberts Collection. These works, by various artists, photographers, painters and sculptors are mostly figurative. They either conflict with Tuazon’s works, or are clearly instrumentalised or (mis)used within the exhibition.

Works from the David Roberts Collection:

Gerald Leslie Brockhurst: *Adolescence, Portrait of Kathleen Nancy Woodward (Dorette)*, 1932

In the 1930's and 1940's British-American artist Gerald Leslie Brockhurst (1890-1978) was one of the most celebrated portraitists, first in England, then in America. He specialised in portraying beautiful women, often-famous personalities such as Marlene Dietrich and the Duchess of Windsor. The etching is a portrait of Kathleen Nancy Woodward, the artist’s second wife.

¹ Extract from Richard Serra, *Verb List*, 1967-68.

² Richard Sierra in *Richard Sierra. Sculpture: Forty Years*, Museum of Modern Art, 2007. P. 29



John Currin: *Napoli*, 2008

John Currin (Born 1962, USA) is best known for his distinctive and controversial depictions of female subjects. His most recent work has dealt with the more explicit exploration of pornography, which confirms his continuing exploration and elaboration of the history of figurative art. Mining sources as diverse as Old European Master portraits, 1970s Playboy magazine advertisements, and mid-twentieth century films, he combines art historical technique with contemporary reference and caricature. Rendering the pornographic through oil paint, Currin evokes the technique of historical painters as various as Gustave Courbet, Christian Schad or Otto Dix.

Andre de Dienes: *Cowgirl, Turning*, 1945

Romanian photographer André de Dienes (1913-1985), the friend and preferred photographer of Norma Jean Baker before she became Marilyn Monroe, emigrated to the US in 1938. He settled in New York to work for *Esquire*, *Vogue*, *Life*, and *Montgomery Ward* before moving to Hollywood in 1944. De Dienes' association with Marilyn Monroe began in 1945 when he hired her for her first modeling job at age 19. A five week road trip photographing the young Norma Jean across California, Nevada, and New Mexico resulted in a love affair and numerous magazine covers around the world. Their working relationship continued until 1953.

Burt Glinn: *Prostitute and Client outside Hotel*, 1971

One of the most famous photographs by Burt Glinn (1925-2008, US) shows Andy Warhol with Edie Sedgwick and Chuck Wein in the streets of New York. Glinn had covered many subjects, from revolutionary leader Fidel Castro's entrance into Havana to the Sinai War as well as the U.S. Marine invasion of Lebanon. The work in the exhibition is part of a series Glinn took in 1971, of prostitutes working the streets in New York. Burt Glinn joined Magnum Photos in 1951 and became a full Member in 1954

Jim Goldberg: *Rich and Poor*, 1982

Jim Goldberg (born 1953, USA) is most known for his famous series *Rich and Poor* (1977-1985) exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1984 and published in a book in 1985 by Random House, Inc. Jim Goldberg's photographs of rich and poor people give an inside look at the American dream at both ends of the social scale. The subjects' own handwritten comments on the prints reveal their innermost fears and aspirations, their perceptions and illusions about themselves, with a frankness that makes the portraits as engrossing as they are disturbing. Jim Goldberg joined Magnum Photos as a Nominee in 2002 and became a Full Member in 2006.

Robert Henderson Blyth: *Intestine of a Dakota on the Rhine*, ca. 1946

Born in Glasgow (1919-1970), Robert Henderson Blyth trained at the Glasgow School of Art. He was appointed to a teaching position at the Edinburgh College of Art in 1946 and served as Artist-in-Residence at Hospitalfield House (Arbroath) in 1947. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1941 and served until the end of World War II. This led to him painting *Existence Precarious* (1946), a self-portrait showing himself as a soldier in a trench, which is now held by the National Gallery of Scotland.

Christian Hoischen: *Geklärt im rechten Winkel (Leuchte 1)*, 2007

The artist's "Leuchten" (lamps) are hybrids of the materiality of his paintings and the geometric transformations of his works on paper, translated into space. Reinforced concrete fragments of varying lengths with unworked ends jut out into the space of the gallery. The weakly shining light bulb mounted on the upper end places purist functionality and minimalist sculpture into a single, tension-filled context. Hoischen's sculptures aim to draw out the moment between function and larger abstract concerns. The title "Geklärt im rechten Winkel" translates into "clarified in the right angle"



Liliane Lijn: *Cosmic Flares III*, 1966

Liliane Lijn was born in New York in 1939, educated in Europe and has lived in London since 1966. A leading pioneer and exponent of kinetic art she has experimented with light, movement, words, film, liquids and industrial materials in her work. "I would like to make cosmic maps. It should be that in the discipline of a drawing there is the same rhythm as that of cosmic forces."

Susan Meiselas: *The Dressing Room, Fryeburg, Maine*, 1975

Susan Meiselas' (born 1948, USA) first major photographic essay focused on the lives of women doing striptease at New England country fairs. She portrayed (from 1972 to 1975) the dancers on stage and off, photographing their public performances as well as their private lives. She also taped interviews with the dancers, their boyfriends, the show managers, and paying customers. The series of photographs, *Carnival Strippers*, was published in 1976. Produced during the early years of the women's movement, *Carnival Strippers* reflects the struggle for identity and self-esteem that characterized a complex era of change. A selection was installed at the Whitney Museum of Art in June 2000. Meiselas joined Magnum Photos in 1976 and became a full Member in 1980.

Banks Violette/ Gardar Eide Einarsson: *Untitled*, 2007

While both artists deal with similar aesthetic issues and create work in sympathy, each has a distinct visual vocabulary and a unique manner of presentation. However, both artists are interested in appropriating and Re-presenting the meaning of images referencing and directly drawn from punk, death metal and other supposedly subversive sub cultures within what is understood as the neutral space of the gallery. Violette (Born 1973, USA) and Einarsson (Born 1976, Norway) are interested in the actual possibilities that emerge when mediated imagery is 'mis-read'.

Andy Warhol: *Sex Parts*, 1978

Andy Warhol (1928-1987) started his *Torso* and *Sex Parts* series in 1977. According to Warhol's assistant at the time, Ronnie Cutrone, Warhol would take Polaroids of men having sex that Victor Hugo would "recruit" from gay bath houses. Warhol also later incorporated sex work into the making by hiring street hustlers to urinate on his *Oxidation Paintings* (1978). Linda Nochlin asserted that Warhol's nudes of the 70s brilliantly navigate the shadowy territory between the two (arguably) mutually exclusive categories of the classical male nude and pornography. The male nudes, as exemplified by this work, are a significant part of Warhol's oeuvre.

Performance: Karl Holmqvist. *How Come Babies Can Cry So Loud?*

Performance artist Karl Holmqvist has been invited by Oscar Tuazon to perform during his opening night. Holmqvist works mainly with language, engaging with the inner structures of texts, transmission and communication. "*Distinguished by their non-spectacular almost casual format, his readings have a hypnotic quality that engenders a momentary shift of focus within the gallery going experience. The possibility of a community, suggested and investigated by Holmqvist's tridimensional and written works, become fleetingly actual. Arching back to beat poetry, they layer moments of sound and concrete poetry with political and religious indictments, individual musings, art references, and cover versions of well-remembered pop songs.*" Gregorio Magnani

Artist's biography:

Oscar Tuazon (born USA, 1975) lives and works in Paris. This is his first solo exhibition in a public gallery in the UK. Recent and upcoming solo exhibitions include: Standard, Oslo (2009); Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin (2009); Michele Maccarone, New York and Jonathan Viner, London (2008); Seattle Art Museum (2008); and the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2007). Recent group exhibitions include: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Vigo (Marco), Vigo (2009); Kunsthalle St Gallen, St Gallen (2008); Contemporary Art Museum St Louis, St Louis; Sculpture Center, New



York (2008). Oscar Tuazon is represented by Balice/Hertling in Paris, Standard in Oslo, Michele Maccarone in New York and Jonathan Viner in London.

About The David Roberts Art Foundation

Founded by collector David Roberts and directed by Vincent Honoré, The David Roberts Art Foundation is a charitable organisation dedicated to supporting contemporary art through a programme of exhibitions, commissions, acquisitions and collaborations with independent curators. Through its activities, the Foundation encourages exchanges and aims to act as a platform for artistic dialogues. We aim to question the structures of production and reception of art works by inviting artists to explore the different formats of an exhibition and to consider it not as a fixed structure, but as a temporary proposal opened to evolutions, experimentations and modifications. Together with group or solo exhibitions, the Foundation hosts an active programme of performances and discussions.

The David Roberts Art Foundation is proudly supported by the Edinburgh House Estates Group of companies.