



Mask/Helmet II

Houseago, Thomas

On display

Title/Description: Mask/Helmet II

Artist/Maker: Houseago, Thomas (Sculptor)

Born: 2010

Object Type: Sculpture

Materials: Bronze, Iron rebar, Redwood

Measurements: 1981 x 597 x 584 mm

Accession Number: 50906

Production Place: United States of America

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Credit Line: Donated by Thomas Houseago

Mask/Helmet II is one of a series of mask-related works created by Thomas Houseago (b.1972). The mask form is a constant source of inspiration, from historic indigenous masks made for masquerade to Western popular culture superheroes. Houseago creates works that combine historic as well as modernist points of references. In the mask, he utilizes a form that perhaps more than any other symbolises this hybridity. Houseago states,

The masks began for me as works in themselves almost accidentally – they were “failed” heads for figurative works. I found myself hanging these pieces on the wall and noticing they had an appearance. They were initially dramatizations of my struggle with what the face should or could look like. The face had gone through a radical transformation in the twentieth century. In the beginning it wasn’t about the cultural history of masks or the performative aspect, but just me trying to finish a sculpture, make it whole – believable. But as the work has developed, I find myself more and more fascinated with the face in life, in my history, in art history, in culture, in performance. It becomes more and more elusive, more complex and fascinating. [1]

His working practice utilises a range of materials including wood, plaster, clay, rebar and hessian, and as in this case cast in bronze. His work is highly charged, raw and with an unworldly sense of the eerie. The mask-face is visceral and abstracted. It is simultaneously monumental yet vulnerable. It is supported by an armature of rebar, exposed and visible. This skeletal structure fixes the mask to a raw block of California Redwood. Houseago has acknowledged his digestion of artists such as

Picasso, Epstein, Moore, Giacometti, Paolozzi and Brancusi. By extension, his work references the indigenous art that so transformed the work of these artists. Like many contemporary artists, the appropriation of diverse cultures and reference points seems unlimited. Houseago alludes both European modernism and the tradition of sculpture. he employs a multitude of styles and references to create a sculptural language that is entirely his own. His desire to make sculpture extends more specifically to creating something that previously did not exist. [2]

Thomas Houseago (b. 1972, Leeds, England) lives and works in Los Angeles. He studied at Jacob Kramer College, Leeds, England (1990 - 1991), Saint Martin's School of Art, London, 1992-4) and studied at De Ateliers, Amsterdam, from 1994 to 1996. Exhibitions include Royal Academy, London (2019); Almost Human, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2019); Vision Paintings, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (2021), As I Went Out One Morning at Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, New York (2013); In 2012 the exhibition at the Sainsbury Centre, Where the Wild Things Are featured works both inside and outside the gallery.

Calvin Winner, February 2023

[1]
https://gagosian.com/media/exhibitions/2015/thomas-houseago-the-medusa-and-other-heads/Gagosian_Thomas_Houseago_The_Medusa_And_Other_Heads_2015_Press_Release.pdf accessed on 23/02/2023

[2] Calvin Winner, Thomas Houseago: Where the Wild Things Are, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, 2012, p.2

Further Reading

Thomas Houseago: Almost Human, Paris-Musees; Bilingual edition (23 July 2019)

Thomas Houseago: What Went Down, Lund Humphries (1 May 2011)

Provenance

Donated by Thomas Houseago 2023

On loan to the Sainsbury Centre
