

JGM GALERIE

MASKS

ROMUALD HAZOUME, CARSTEN HÖLLER, THOMAS HOUSEAGO, MATHIEU MERCIER, NATHAN MABRY, DENIS SAVARY, KEITH SONNIER, PATRICK TOSANI

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OPENING WEDNESDAY APRIL 16

JGM GALERIE is pleased to announce a new group exhibition, *Masks*, featuring a selection of artworks following the long tradition of masks in contemporary art.

This exhibition gathers works made by influential artists from the French, English, German, American and African contemporary scenes.

An ornament, a disguise, a sculpture, a mortuary object, folkloric or spiritual, the mask is an eco-museum of its own. Whether it is created in an abstract contemporary way, conceptual or not, or as a reference to its traditional shape, the mask remains an enigmatic object which veils as much as it unveils the secrets of human consciousness.

"In sculpture, the mask's status can be problematic. Is it an intermediary stage or a definitive work? It is linked to the fragmentation of presentation, the decisive route to the revival of sculpture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

One of the major issues of the mask is the expression, or the absence of one: sculptors have always risen to the challenge of trying to restore this particular presence.

It was around 1906 that a new source of inspiration, coming from Africa, pushed aside the accepted rules of representation, and brought about a deconstruction of facial features. African masks, and masks then called "primitive" in general, finished the depersonalisation process of the portrait which had started in Europe. Picasso, Derain and Vlaminck were filled with enthusiasm for masks and sculptures in non-Western arts, which they perceived as the confirmation of their own desire for abstraction. As well as this breaking down of form, there was the fascination exercised by the supernatural dimension of these cult objects."

(Masks From Carpeaux to Picasso – Musée d'Orsay 2008 – Curator Edouard Papet, Chief Museum Curator)

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Romuald Hazoumè (born in Porto Novo, 1962) is an artist from the Republic of Benin.

Hazoumè is known for his mask series. He started this phase of his art in the mid-1980s. These masks, made from discarded gasoline canisters, resemble those used in traditional African culture and ceremonies. In explaining these works, Hazoumè has said: "I send back to the West that which belongs to them, that is to say, the refuse of consumer society that invades us every day."

Romuald Hazoumè has been widely exhibited in many major international galleries and museums, including the British Museum, London, the Guggenheim, Bilbao, the Victoria & Albert Museum, London and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New-York. After winning the Arnold Bode Prize (at the Kassel documenta12 in 2007), the stellar trajectory of Hazoumè's rise to prominence has catapulted him into leading ranks of the international artistic community. Mastering a wide range of media, Hazoumè creates masks, photographs, works on canvas, sculptures and installations. Whether confronting the legacy of the slave trade or creating witty contemporary portraits, Hazoumè's work documents the irrepressible diversity of Africa today.

Carsten Höller (born December 1961) is a Belgian artist. He lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden. Today, he also shares a house in Ghana with colleague Marcel Odenbach.

Only during the late 1980s did he first begin making art. However, he has been working as a research entomologist until 1994.

Work

Höller came to prominence in the 1990s alongside a group of artists including Maurizio Cattelan, Douglas Gordon, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Andrea Zittel who worked across disciplines to reimagine the experience and the space of art. In his work, Höller creates situations which question familiar forms of perception and allow exhibition visitors to experiment on themselves, often inviting the public's active participation in so-called "influential environments". In their form, Höller's works are occasionally reminiscent of scientific laboratory arrangements, allowing the viewer to become the subject of an experiment. His work since the early 1990s has encompassed buildings, vehicles, slides, toys, games, narcotics, animals, performances, lectures, 3D films, flashing lights, mirrors, eye-wear and sensory deprivation tanks.

Höller's artistic practice reflects the interaction between work and public in various ways, sometimes chemically analyzing the nature of human emotions. His avid interest in the double harks back to the start of his career, when Höller designed a series of works with his then girlfriend, the artist Rosemarie Trockel, actually doubling himself up in another creator.

His work has been shown at Fondazione Prada in Milan, at MOCA in Los Angeles, in the Documenta X in Kassel, Germany, at New Museum in New-York, at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

Thomas Houseago (b. 1972 in Leeds, Great Britain) is a contemporary visual artist. He currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

Thomas Houseago studied at Central Saint Martins in London and the Ateliers in Amsterdam. After completing his studies, he lived and worked for several years in Brussels before moving to Los Angeles. During the past year, the work of Thomas Houseago has been shown in Glasgow, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Milan, Berlin, Arnhem (Sonsbeek 2008) and Brussels.

Houseago creates monumental, often figurative sculptures that have a striking ability to simultaneously convey states of power and vulnerability. His work references genres such as Cubism and Futurism and plays on the history and tradition of statues. Using materials associated with classical and modernist sculpture (such as carved wood, clay, plaster and bronze), as well as less traditional materials (steel rods, concrete and hessian), Houseago creates sculptures that emphatically reveal the process of making. Typical of his work is the combination of elements rendered in flat portions of wood with others sculpted in the round, together with hand-drawn components that are, in a technical tour-de-force, cast and printed onto the works. Whilst Houseago's oeuvre can be seen as a continuation of a historical sculptural tradition, the unusual combinations of materials, the inclusion of references drawn from popular culture and the unusual interplay between two and three-dimensional elements, all challenge the hierarchy inherent within visual forms, and the materials and values associated with them.

Recent solo exhibitions include the Storm King Sculpture Park, Mountainville, New York (forthcoming), a major retrospective curated by Paul Nesbitt at The Royal Botanical Gardens, Inverleith House, Edinburgh, Scotland entitled *The Beat of the Show* (2011) and *What Went Down* at the Centre International d'Art et du Paysage de l'Île de Vassivière, France (2011).

Mathieu Mercier (born in 1970), lives and works in Paris.

Mathieu Mercier's work explores the relationship between contemporary mass-produced consumer objects and their aesthetic origins in early 20th Century art and design. He frequently employs common household and industrial materials to create his sculptural, photographic, and wall-based works.

Mercier's work often refers to utopian movements such as De Stijl and Russian Constructivism. One series of sculptures, titled 'Drum and Bass', recreates classic Mondrian compositions out of black DIY shelving and primary-colored household objects such as plastic bins, extension cables, and stationary folders. In 'Plastic Anchors Wall', Mercier again traces the use of primary colors from early Modernist art, through to their function as color coding for different sizes of screw anchors. By creating a dialogue between utopian art and design icons and contemporary mass-produced objects, Mercier highlights the evolution of the meaning of "modernity", from a social project, to a capital gain.

After winning the Marcel-Duchamp price in 2003 followed by a solo show at Centre George Pompidou in Paris, his work has been exhibited at the Musée d'art moderne in Paris/ARC in 2007, then at the Kunsthalle of Nuremberg in 2008.