

**PALOMA VARGA WEISZ****29 November 2007 - 12 January 2008****69 South Audley Street W1****Private view 29 November 6 - 8pm**

For her second solo show at Sadie Coles HQ, Paloma Varga Weisz presents a distinctive body of new work comprising a series of her watercolour drawings and a group of mainly wooden sculptures.

Given simple, often one word titles, the drawings portray abstract narrative characters such as *Geknickter Mann (Broken Man)*, *Großer Hut (Big Hat)*, and *Midget Pedro*. Without contextual surroundings, the figures are concentrated and though the viewer may not be able to place them exactly, they are irrefutably evocative of our cultural history, be it mythical, religious or comic.



An integral part of her oeuvre, the new drawings mark a departure for the artist, employing a new cast of characters, much more grounded in the real world rather than fantasy. Humour comes to the fore in pictures such as *Raucher (Smoker)* and *Bettler (Begger)*. These comedies are counterpoised by other figures that are physically constrained in ways symbolic of psychological angst – there is a hunchback and someone with a harelip, others are burdened with heavy fur mantels, adorned with huge hats or ridiculously exaggerated features.

Themes of bodily containment and deconstruction also run current in the new sculptures. In one piece a bulbous torso hangs from the wall. Covered in copper the piece possesses a mute preciousness. Focus is drawn to the quiet face, solemn with eyes shut and the fact that the figure is limbless is almost hard to see, so great is the presence of its rounded form. In another piece this experience is inverted when the torso is replaced by a wicker basket. Head, hands and feet in carved lime wood are attached to this boxy, lifeless device. Yet there are also moments of silent surprise. In one piece out of a top hat emerges not a white rabbit, but a naked old woman seamlessly sculpted and treated in the traditional technique of 'fassen' (the German word for polychromy). As in the drawings, a range of influences are fused, perhaps most notably in *Archface*, at once reminiscent of Jugendstil as well as an entrance to a Buddhist temple, a passage. Carved to the point at which it is so smooth and undulating it resembles oozing volcanic lava and then covered in silver, it seems to almost defy the material of which it was made. Meanwhile, a final piece made of plaster, crumbling at the edges, invites a more questioning reading of the other polished surfaces.

Trained as a woodcarver, in her sculptures and drawings, Varga Weisz creates timeless works which she says she wants 'to take on a life of their own and gain their own expression'. By means of a fusion of influences from Gothic Madonnas to the Teletubbies, her works encapsulate simultaneously states of adult knowingness and childhood innocence, personal reference and collective memory. The determination and tenacity with which she works is urgently felt throughout.

Paloma Varga Weisz, born in 1966, was raised in Neustadt an der Weinstrasse, Germany. She lives and works in Düsseldorf. She has had solo exhibitions at the Museum Kurhaus Kleve, 2005 and has been included in numerous group exhibitions including Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, Kunstverein Düsseldorf, 2005 Venice Biennale, the Berlin Biennial, 2006, as well the permanent collection of K21.

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N.B. Opening hours Tuesday – Saturday 11am – 6pm