

SKARSTEDT

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SKARSTEDT TO PRESENT AN EXHIBITION OF SCULPTURES BY JUAN MUÑOZ IN LONDON.

Juan Muñoz: Arenas

19th January – 24th February 2018

Opening Reception: Thursday 18th January, 6-8 pm

Skarstedt is delighted to announce an exhibition of important figurative sculptures by Juan Muñoz (1953 -2001) at the London gallery in January. This will be the first opportunity to see a dedicated show of the artist's work in London since 2012 and marks ten years since his major retrospective at Tate Modern in 2008. Featuring iconic floor-based sculptures, wall-mounted figures and a suspended solitary man, the exhibition is installed across three interconnecting rooms.



For Muñoz, the space in which the figures are positioned and the architecture of that space plays a crucial role in how they are perceived and how we respond to them. Positioned high on the wall, the mounted figurative ensembles disrupt the normal angles of vision, heightening the dramatic effect of their presence. Looking up to view *Hombre Colgado Boca*, 2001, influenced by Degas's *Miss Lala at the Cirque Fernando*, 1879, or engaging with the smaller than life-size figures in *Piggyback (Chinese Down)*, 1997, the viewer experiences the works bodily as well as visually. Playing with the notion of

spectatorship, the interior space of the gallery becomes an arena in which the figures are simultaneously watching and being watched.

This idea of the spectacle being reversed onto the viewer is heightened in the main room of the gallery by the chattering and laughing figures coming alive on all sides and centre. Entering this charged environment, the viewer is excluded from their private narratives. Unlike traditional forms of figurative sculpture, Muñoz's figures don't perform, instead they are immersed in their own worlds and conversations.

Further distancing the figures from the viewer, Muñoz draws on their otherness, playing with our sense of scale and traditional notions of exoticism. The smiling Chinese figure in *Piggyback (Chinese Down)* belongs to a repertoire of characters that Muñoz created including the dwarf, ballerina and ventriloquist dummy, all of whom appear to us as both familiar and strange:

‘There is something about their appearance that makes them different, and this difference in effect excludes the spectator from the room they are occupying ... The spectator becomes very much like the object to be looked at, and perhaps the viewer has become the one who is on view’.¹

¹ J. Muñoz, quoted in Paul Schimmel, ‘An Interview with Juan Muñoz’, *Juan Muñoz*, p.150.

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A self-described storyteller, Muñoz's works function like story tales in which the movements of the spectator are deliberately set out by him. Encouraging the viewer to wander in and among the sculptures, he choreographs their participation within the interior landscape of the gallery. Caught in a freeze-frame moment, the three-dimensional tableaux in bronze and resin both invite and reject attention, all the while raising questions about the nature of looking and our way of being:

'My characters sometimes behave as a mirror that cannot reflect. They are there to tell you something about your looking, but they cannot, because they don't let you see yourself.'²

About Juan Muñoz

One of the most significant sculptors of his generation, Juan Muñoz (1953 -2001) rose to international prominence in the mid-1980s for his return to the human form and his emphasis on the relationship of sculpture, architecture and the viewer. His work was recently the subject of a solo exhibition at the Hangar Bicocca, Milan in 2015, curated by Vicente Todolí.

Most recently in the UK, one of Muñoz's 'Conversation' pieces was shown at Turner Contemporary, Kent in 2013. Important retrospectives of his work include those at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2009), Tate Modern, London and the Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain (2008), the Musée de Grenoble Grenoble (2007), K21 Kunstsammlung, Dusseldorf (2006-2007); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2003), The Art Institute of Chicago (2002), the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston(2003).

About Skarstedt

Focusing on contemporary European and American artists of the late twentieth century, Skarstedt is committed to mounting museum-quality exhibitions. Skarstedt London is located at 8 Bennet Street in the historic district of St James's. The gallery moved to its new space in October 2016 following four successful years on Old Bond Street. The inaugural exhibition *Cindy Sherman and David Salle: History Portraits and Tapestry Paintings* has been followed by a programme of curated historical exhibitions, most recently *de Kooning: Late Paintings*.

Notes to editors

Exhibition: *Juan Muñoz: Arenas*

Location: Skarstedt, 8 Bennet St., St James's, London, SW1A 1RP

Telephone: +44 (0) 207 499 5200

Dates: 19th January – 24th February 2018.

Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am - 6pm; Saturday 10am – 5 pm. Monday by appointment.

Admission is free

www.skarstedt.com

Artwork image: *Three Laughing at One*, 2000
polyester resin, chairs 51 x 78 3/4 x 23 5/8 in. (129.5 x 200 x 60 cm.)

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² Ibid.