

LONDONIST

Art Review: Thomas Schutte @ Serpentine Gallery

30 September 2012



Thomas Schütte Memorial for unknown artist 2011 Installation view, Thomas Schütte: Faces & Figures Serpentine Gallery, London (25 September - 18 November 2012) © 2012 Gautier Deblonde

The term 'one of the world's most influential living artists' is bandied around far too gratuitously in our opinion, and it's been used in the press release for Thomas Schutte's latest exhibition examining portraiture through various media. So do his latest works live up to the hype?

At the centre of the gallery is 'father state' a tall and imposing figure who becomes more frail as your eyes move down him - to the point that even the outline of his legs aren't visible through his robe. This is a commentary on how many leaders are presented to the public on television - a noble head and shoulders addressing the nation, with the rest of the body hidden behind a desk or lectern.

Surrounding this figure are ghostly photographs of faces expressing anger or hurt, reflecting the persecution of a repressive regime. Complimenting yet contrasting with this is the work 'Jerks' that caricatures world leaders in the gallery next door.

Another highlight of this display is outside on the grass. Two monumental bronze sculptures display two sets of heads and torsos bound together on wooden supports. Their facial expressions range from serenity to anguish, yet the situation implies they're about to be burnt alive. The title 'united enemies' suggests that mutual hatred results in the same fate for both parties.

Schutte's display is a masterclass in how to create gripping and engaging sculptures, from the humorous to the political.

Thomas Schütte: Faces & Figures is on display in the Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens until 18 November. Admission is free.



Thomas Schütte Vater Staat (Father State) 2010 Installation view, Thomas Schütte: Faces & Figures Serpentine Gallery, London (25 September - 18 November 2012) © 2012 Gautier Deblonde



Thomas Schütte Walser's wife 2011 Installation view, Thomas Schütte: Faces & Figures Serpentine Gallery, London (25 September - 18 November 2012) © 2012 Gautier Deblonde



Thomas Schütte United enemies 2011 InInstallation view, Thomas Schütte: Faces & Figures Serpentine Gallery, London (25 September - 18 November 2012) © 2012 Gautier Deblonde



Thomas Schütte Bert. Photo: Gino Bühler © DACS 2012



Thomas Schütte Innocenti 1994. Photograph: Thomas Schütte © DACS 2012