

GALLERIA BORGHESI

Press Release

Galleria Borghese

Piazzale del Museo Borghese, 5

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Hours: Tues–Sun 8.30am–7.30pm

Thomas Houseago: *Striding Figure/Standing Figure*

Saturday May 25–Sunday July 7, 2013

I am increasingly fascinated by the depiction of the figure – how different traditions, ideals, and techniques are interpreted, misinterpreted and passed on – and I seek to engage in an art-historical dialogue about the figure, its representation and the potential energy or truth it can hold in our time. In the Galleria Borghese there is an incredible interplay between classical ideals of architecture, painting and sculpture.

Thomas Houseago

The Galleria Borghese is pleased to present three new sculptures by Thomas Houseago in collaboration with Gagosian Rome.

Houseago evokes the history of figurative sculpture, both ancient and modern, and considers it in the conditions of his own time. Employing elemental materials, such as wood, hemp, plaster and iron, he stitches together art-historical, mythological and pop-cultural references, from African tribal art, science fiction, Hanna-Barbera cartoon imagery and Italian Mannerism to Star Wars droids. Each figure is a literal embodiment of the evolution of concept and process via bricolage; body parts are fused together in improbable and immediate ways, that recall the game of exquisite corpse, such as realistically rendered, three-dimensional limbs joined to hand-drawn representations. With skeletons of exposed iron rebar and raw edges from jigsaw cuts, classic forms are roughly treated, perhaps in order to exact new vitality.

Two large-scale sculptures – *Striding Figure (Rome I)* and *Standing Figure (Roman Figure I)*, (both 2013) – standing in the serene environment of the Uccelliera, a seventeenth-century aviary on the grounds of the Galleria Borghese. Cast from clay in plaster and hemp with iron rebar supports, *Striding Figure (Rome I)* is a broad-shouldered colossus in powerful mid-step, while *Standing Figure (Roman Figure I)* adopts a classic expository pose, one arm draped over its head. Although their heavily textured surfaces and features are rough with hand-applied slathers and smears, the partially abstracted figures, with their clearly assembled components, evince a sharp anatomical veracity.

Lumps of plaster form flexed calf muscles, the curve of a cheekbone, or a toenail; the swell of a rib cage seems to tremble with breath. Majestic antique stone and bronze forms survive in fragments,

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forceful relics that speak volumes about the slow vicissitudes of the passing centuries; Houseago's schematic figures, monuments to an accelerated present, suggest a more vulnerable, transient existence amidst the violent and momentous riptides of contemporary culture and life.

Thomas Houseago was born in 1972 in Leeds, England. He studied at the Central Saint Martins College of Art, London, and De Ateliers, Amsterdam. Recent exhibitions include: "The Artist's Museum," MOCA, Los Angeles (2010); "What Went Down," Modern Art Oxford (2010, traveled to: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach; Centre International d'Art et du Paysage de l'Île de Vassivière, Beaumont-du-Lac (through 2011)); "The Beat of the Show," Inverlieth House, Edinburgh (2011); "The World Belongs to You," Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2011); "Where the Wild Things Are" and "Thomas Houseago: Hermaphrodite," Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts, Norwich (2012). His work was included in the 2010 Whitney Biennial. A major solo exhibition, "As I Went Out One Morning," opens in May 2013 at the Storm King Art Center in Mountainville, New York. In January 2013, the Dijon art center Le Consortium installed a selection of Houseago's sculptures around the streets of Aix-en-Provence, France. Houseago lives and works in Los Angeles.

Housed in the former Villa Borghese Pinciana outside the city of Rome, the Galleria Borghese holds a substantial part of the Borghese collection of paintings, sculpture and antiquities, begun from the seventeenth century by the Cardinal and patron of the arts Scipione Borghese.