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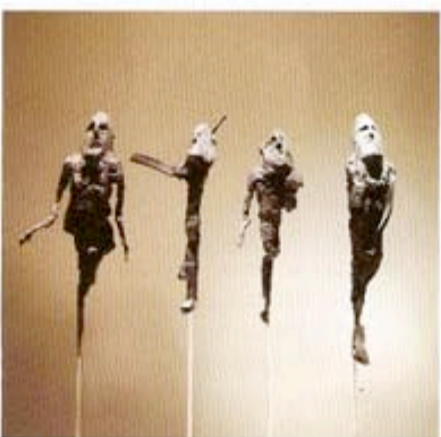
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## Artist profile Tim Shaw



Tim Shaw's stark and dramatic figures expose the raw inhumanity of man

Words by Peta-Jane Field



Below: Funerary Figures, Man Fertility Figure, The Cunt, Raven, detail from Tank On Fire, Raven, detail from Fertility Figure, With Pointed Head, Fertility Figure, With Pointed Head

Goldfish Edgy and anti-mainstream

Described as an edgy artist, award-winning sculptor Tim Shaw is sometimes regarded as shocking, his work seeking out the darker recesses of human nature. Yet there is another side to Tim. A recent photograph shows him gazing deep into the face of his Minotaur sculpture, which is being displayed outside the Royal Opera House. This image conveys the essential humanity of this artist. His beast's menacing bowed head paradoxically evokes an aching tenderness for his perpetual imprisonment - a creature trapped in eternal limbo.

Born and brought up in Belfast, Tim's future role as a sculptor was decided while he was at school. "Working with clay felt natural and comfortable," he explains, "and from the moment I starting using it, I knew exactly what I wanted to do for the rest of my life." After studying at Falmouth College of Arts in 1989, Tim has produced numerous complex sculpture/installations that are shown in public spaces as well as galleries. He utilises an astonishing array of different elements to create his sculptures from the more traditional clay and stone to black plastic bags, copper wire and polystyrene foam, and, of course, many of his works are cast in bronze.

Joseph Clarke, gallery director at Goldfish, has always espoused Tim's work, which complements the anti-mainstream ethos of the gallery. He says: "Tim is a consummate sculptor who illustrates emotion, humanity, individuality, spirit and integrity."

A solo show in September 2007 was Tim's first without an overarching motif. "After years of producing themed commissions, I welcomed this opportunity to create one-off pieces," he says. The exhibition showed the well-publicised figure of Silenus, an earlier version of his Minotaur and a traumatic installation - 'Casting a Dark Democracy' - featuring tortured Abu Ghraib figures. After seeing Tim's work, art critic and writer Brian Sewell commented that it "thumped anything he had seen in London".

As the second recipient of the Kenneth Armitage Fellowship, Tim has exclusive use of Kenneth's own old studio in London for two years. "The Fellowship has opened doors for me," says Tim, "I am in contact with major artists and, at the moment, this is a wonderful place for me to live and work in terms of my progression as an artist."

The current exhibition at Goldfish shows work produced during the first year of this Fellowship, which articulates ideas for potential large-scale sculptures. Evolved from his Silenus figure, Tim's ritualistic and earthy fertility maquettes express a primitive and potent force, their sensuality elemental and disturbing. Influenced by photo-journalistic images of conflict, two larger sculptures, 'Man on Fire: What God of Love inspires such Hatred in the Hearts of Men' and 'Tank on Fire', portray absolute horror. "I tried to imagine the agonised thoughts racing through the mind of someone consumed by fire as they are poised between life and death - and their growing sense of terror as they battled to stay alive," Tim explains. 'Funerary Figures' was inspired by African carved ancestral figures shown at the Royal Academy. "This experience was phantasmal," Tim recalls, "like seeing spirits from a different time and place tap upon the window of our present-day reality."

Tim's work is an unflinching exposition of man's inhumanity to his fellow man and beast, the world's ancient rituals tainted by contemporary viciousness. One of his future projects is to create an installation exploring the issue of torture. By exposing this evil seam, Tim is also demanding that we question our own humanity and wonder how "this God of love generates so much raging hatred amongst fellow men". <

Info 'Future History, Maquettes and Drawings, London 2007', runs until 5 July at Goldfish, 58 Chapel Street, Penzance. Call 01736 360573 or visit www.goldfishfineart.co.uk for details.

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## Earlier work

AN IMPRESSIVE CAREER

'The Dance of the Middle World' shows 70 small figures and objects, from Vulcan bombers to medieval characters, on an altar-like construction.

'La Corrida - Dreams in Red' presents miniature tableaux of bulls, horses, toreadors and dancers on a red drum-shaped table, illuminated by fibre optics.

'Dionysus and the Maenads' at the Eden Project portrays Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, as a bull, presiding over his followers, the Maenads, as they writhe through vines in an orgiastic rite.

'A bust of Seamus Heaney', a private commission which "captured Seamus' spirit".

## Awards

2006 The Kenneth Armitage Fellowship  
2005 Royal Ulster Academy Annual Exhibition - The Mullan Prize  
2005 The British School at Athens - Prince of Wales Bursary  
2003 Millfield Open Summer Exhibition - First prize  
1997 Discerning Eye, Mall Galleries, London - Prize winner  
1996 Delfina Studio Trust Award - residency at Casa Manila, Spain  
1990 Prince's Trust Award

