



THOMAS SCHÜTTE  
ALTE FREUNDE

March 1 – April 28, 2012

We are pleased to announce the exhibition Thomas Schütte: Alte Freunde at Carolina Nitsch Project Room, 534 W. 22<sup>nd</sup> St, New York.

*Alte Freunde* (Old Friends), 2010 is a suite of ten etchings based on a series of small polymer clay sculptures of the same name, which Schütte made in the early 1990's. These characters, all older men, with striking features are depicted alone or in pairs and appear like characters in a Shakespearean play or politicians in a debate. They seem antagonized, anguished and shrewd; they appear mutually distrustful and pompously self-important. One also can recognize a similarity with the caricatures of Honor Daumier and *The Caprichos* by Francisco Jose de Goya. Schütte was working on another suite of prints and sculptures, *United Enemies* (1993), around the same time while in residence in Rome. There was a peaceful revolution in Italian politics at this time and voters, disillusioned with governmental paralysis, massive debt, extensive corruption, and influence of organized crime, demanded political, economic, and ethical reforms. However, the same could be said, to greater or lesser degrees, of just about any governmental body today and throughout history, which lends a sense of timelessness to this series and much of Schütte's work in general.

A suite of 18 etchings titled *Frauen* (Women), 2006 will also be on view, in which Schütte again revisits the figure. Like *Alte Freunde*, this series is based on earlier works in ceramic, steel and bronze in which he contorts the female figure, by squeezing, cutting, and pounding the form. The images fluctuate between being playfully abstract and brutally assaulting. They seem as if they started out as tender observations of the female body, but were then commandeered by Schütte's subconscious instinct and morphed into these extreme forms. In looking at this series one is immediately reminded of the historical tradition of figurative sculpture, specifically Rodin, Maillol, and Matisse. In these etchings there is also a technical similarity with Picasso's etchings from the 347 series in which he employed open bite and reticulated sugar lift.

Also present is a suite of 27 etchings, *Architektur Modelle* (Architectural Models) 1980–2006, which document various structures that Schütte has created over this 26 year period. These constructions, some of which have been realized full scale, have the appearance of Modernist, Bauhaus creations and sometimes explore deep, challenging issues such as 20<sup>th</sup> century German History, postwar guilt, reconstruction, memorials and monuments while others seem merely humorous or even absurd. Many show small figures in or near the models in order to give scale, but these figures also act as a way for the viewer to imagine themselves in the building while at the same time hovering above from a critical distance. The titles, which are printed beneath the etching, sometimes help interpret the buildings use but more often than not, cast a sense of doubt in the viewer.

Schütte claims that essentially his forms evolve from grappling with technical problems and the material. He explained in a conversation with James Lingwood:

"So far as meanings are concerned, I would rather talk with my hands and through forms and let these creatures live their own lives and tell their own stories. Avoiding certain fixed positions is important to me, avoiding being too classical or too predictable... I always hope in the end the work will be physically present. That the work leads to essential questions is important. I don't feel the weight [of tradition] because when I do them, I'm not thinking about the history, I'm thinking about the future."  
(Thomas Schütte, Phaidon Press 1998, p. 23-24)

For further information or images please contact the gallery at 212-645-2030 or email: [info@carolinanitsch.com](mailto:info@carolinanitsch.com)