



François Ruegg Status | Statues

Musée Ariana, 15 September 2017 – 4 March 2018

Presskit

Geneva, September 2017- The Swiss ceramist and visual artist François Ruegg (b. 1954) questions the complex relationship between the pedestal and the work of art. Throughout history, the elite "status" of the person represented has been linked to the height and type of base on which he or she is perched. Through a series of monumental porcelain sculptures created in Jingdezhen (China), the artist revisits the base-statue combination. Busts, as well as objects of seduction, and even discarded items are given an appropriate pedestal. Moreover, in order to create a distance - or to retain a sense of mystery - the people and things are hidden under a veil.

François Ruegg is most definitely an artist of the world: his insatiable curiosity for mankind and for human creation in all its diversity is his driving force and brings colour to his life. From Geneva to Sun Valley, from Bogota to Bali, and more recently from Yverdon to Jingdezhen, his travels have all been interspersed with encounters and exchanges, and leave behind tangible porcelain reminders. Thus, over the years, his innovative "proposals" (in his constant concern for upholding free choice, he hates to impose!) have built up a corpus of original, individual, and striking work. His love of contact with others and for exchange has led François Ruegg to tackle a variety of challenges: teaching, notably at the CFP Arts in Geneva (Centre for Professional Training in the Arts), running a gallery ("Déjà-vu" in Yverdon), and dealing with industry (overseeing the production in an Italian factory of the ceramic fresco by Hans Erni). These diverse partnerships have not resulted in him spreading himself too thinly or in distancing him from himself, but have instead enriched his vision and his work, as have his regular visits to contemporary art exhibitions and the ties developed with many artists.

François Ruegg did not wish the exhibition at the Musée Ariana to take a retrospective viewpoint, but has instead devised it as a springboard to open a new door: Jingdezhen. The idea of coming face-to-face with the cradle of porcelain in China seemed an obvious choice for this lover of the most demanding, but also the noblest, of ceramic materials. Yet he still had to arrive in the Middle Kingdom with a concrete project.

The status of the pedestal in the work of art in general, and in figurative sculpture in particular, merited a transition to a contemporary context. A plinth elevates an individual both physically and spiritually, and sanctifies the person in a position of respectability and authority over an indistinct mass. Does this hierarchical superiority of a so-called intellectual, political or social elite go beyond a mere normative appearance? What qualities are required to become someone? Money, intelligence, skin colour, gender, sexual preferences, merit, power or chance? The artist refrains from offering conclusions or from posing as a moralizer, thus leaving the viewer the freedom whether or not to take a stance in this context. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to detect in his approach a critical look at a society based on appearances to the extent of losing its soul. The assertion of free thought, of the right to exist as a differentiated individual, and exasperation prompted by current tendencies that foster inward-looking attitudes and the fear of the other, are latent and ever-present.

This research into the pedestal necessitated long preparatory wanderings (notably in the Musée Ariana's storerooms) in order to pinpoint the conventions associated with the pedestal throughout history: dimensional ratio, formal types (alternating between square and circular, arching and moulding of the sides, positioning of the sculpture and the bust, etc.). With the help of this enriched awareness, the ceramist has endeavoured to create the required sculptures to be perched on pedestals. To do this, François Ruegg has developed even further his previous work that involved concealing people and objects under a veil. Rather than merely setting busts or figures on his pedestals, he also places on them items of seduction, vegetables, utensils and discarded objects, in short, everything involved in people's daily lifecycle: to be, to appear, to desire, to eat, to throw away ...

This is how, in Ruegg's universe, a plastic crockery set immobilised under cellophane, interestingly-shaped vegetables, a pointed court shoe, a well-rounded pair of men's underpants, an insignificant rubbish bag, and even a bust of a possibly famous man can co-exist. All are veiled, some draped in a porcelain virginity, others coated with voluptuous and alluring, red, black or shiny glazes. The pedestal forms an inseparable and complementary duo with them, in a dialogue not lacking in humour or derision; much more than being a mere foil to the sculpture, it is an integral part of it.

In China, François Ruegg exploited the technological possibilities and infrastructures of the porcelain industry, using the 3D scanner to make his moulds, and transposing them to a fun and exhilarating monumental scale. Of course, the language barrier, the logistical difficulties and administrative red tape, and the cultural confrontations are all very real, but the artist has known how to transcend them in order to implement his objectives in the best possible way, expressing himself with an aesthetic freedom rooted in the formal rigour which characterizes his work.

It is not only through words or concepts that we should apprehend François Ruegg's "Status I Statues", but above all through how they resonate within us. We have to go beyond the seductive pop design of the tube of lipstick that supports the high-heeled shoe, beyond the laughter of the artist who camouflages some carefully buried wounds. Transcending appearances, even going as far as setting himself up on a porcelain pedestal, François Ruegg does not act entirely alone, but generously and committedly invites us to accompany him in his nomadic wanderings.

Anne-Claire Schumacher
Exhibition curator

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Musée Ariana

Swiss Museum of Ceramics and Glass

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www.ariana-geneve.ch

Open Tuesday to Sunday 10 am – 6 pm. Closed on Mondays

Free admission

Exhibition preview : Thursday 14 September at 7 pm

Admission fee

5 / 3 CHF

Free for under 18s and on the first Sunday of the month

On other Sundays: two for the price of one

Press visit on request : presse.ariana@ville-ge.ch

Publication

Suzanne Rivier, Anne-Claire Schumacher, François Ruegg. Status-Statues 2016-2017 | Previous Path 1985-2015, Geneva, L'Esprit de la Lettre Editions, 2017, trilingual French/ English/Chinese edition, ISBN 978-2-940587-05-6, CHF 28.-

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Un musée

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RENDEZ-VOUS

Guided tours

Sundays 17 September and 4 March at 11.00 with the artist in attendance

Sundays 1 October, 5 November, 14 January at 15.00, and 10 December and 4 February at 11.00

Touch tours for blind and visually-impaired people

Thursday 19 October, Tuesday 14 November and Saturday 18 November at 14.30

Prior reservation required

Visits for the under 20s

Three young people invite other under 20s to discover the exhibition

Sundays 19 November at 11.00 and 4 February at 14.00

Workshop for adults “The Prestige of the Pedestal”

Wednesday 31 January 10.00 – 12.30 or 14.00 – 16.30

Payable on registration, 50 CHF per person

Saturday 3 February 10.00 – 17.00

Payable on registration, 90 CHF per person

Tea Time: “Informal discussion with François Ruegg”

Sunday 10 December at 16.00

Payable on registration, 15 CHF per person (hot beverage and cake included)

Visit for teachers

Wednesday 18 October 14.00 – 16.00

Prior reservation required

Visitor Services

Monday – Friday

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VISUALS FOR THE PRESS

01 **François Ruegg, (CH, 1954)**
Accessories of Feminine Seduction, 2016-2017
Porcelain
67x42x42 cm

Property of the artist
Photo : Zhang Lei



02 **François Ruegg, (CH, 1954)**
Accessories of Masculine Seduction, 2016-2017
Porcelain
67x42x42 cm

Property of the artist
Photo : Zhang Lei



03 **François Ruegg, (CH, 1954)**
Banana & Co, 2016-2017
Porcelain
42x40x47 cm

Property of the artist
Photo : Zhang Lei



04 **François Ruegg, (CH, 1954)**
Chinese Plate, 2016-2017
Porcelain
45x48x48 cm

Property of the artist
Photo : Zhang Lei



05 **François Ruegg, (CH, 1954)**
Can't hear, 2016-2017
Porcelain
81x40x20 cm

Property of the artist
Photo : Zhang Lei



06 **François Ruegg, (CH, 1954)**

Can't talk, 2016-2017

Porcelain

81x40x23 cm

Property of the artist

Photo : Zhang Lei



07 **François Ruegg, (CH, 1954)**

Trashbag, 2016-2017

Porcelain

71.5x38x32 cm

Property of the artist

Photo : Zhang Lei



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