

JOHN ISAACS

GATHERING DUST

*"Is there not a fine silken thread
Time woven in the astral loom of the cosmos
Connecting together our earth bound dreams
For if it were any other way
The world could not appear as it does
And the magic of all would cease to be"*

Wilhelm Van Der Post - Atlas Poeticus

"We come upon a contention which is so astonishing that we must dwell upon it. This contention holds that what we call our civilization is largely responsible for our misery..."

Sigmund Freud - Civilization and its Discontents

Travesia Cuatro is pleased to present the first solo exhibition in Spain for British artist John Isaacs. Often taking a highly representational and darkly humorous approach to his varying subject matter over the last 15 years, it is not possible to categorise or define the work of this mercurial artist. However, whether it is directly in his titles, or in the physical manifestation of his work, Isaacs presents to us a world vision full of both longing and a historically informed intellect. His work is heavily infused with a romantic sense of the personal and societal utopia, but also, by reflecting the very absurdity of it's conception, elevated beyond parody and posturing to produce genuine artefacts of the soul. For Isaacs it is not the things that separate us from one another but the things that we share which are of interest, the vastly eclectic styles and materials he uses, incorporating sculpture, painting, photography, video and installation, coupled to the expanded time frame of the historical and cultural references within it confronts us with a multi-perspectival and historically transcendental world.

With the exhibition title "*Gathering Dust*", Isaacs seeks to re-place the moment already passed into the present, to re-signify that which is, or has been, into that, which will be. A new group of 20 drawings varying in style and historical precedent revel in the lost implications of history, and the entrapment of mankind in it's civilized self. The bronze sculpture of a hand, "*from a distance you look smaller...but I know that you are there*". Ripped from a statue and fallen to the ground, suggests a radical political change, or at least a lack of faith in permanence. Isaacs uses bronze not just as a sculptural material, but for it's historical and political significance. The seemingly aggressive posture of the hand can also be read as an act of defiance, though what springs to mind at first are the images of changing political climates, statues of leaders around the world tumbling. As in many of Isaacs' works, the object as a whole is absent, or truncated. A small piece remains as the

signifier of the whole. Just as "from a distance you look smaller...but I know that you are there" has its origins in the public domain, "where is my world" contrasts the plight of the individual, of faith against the societal construct. What appears to be an amorphous organ, but that on closer inspection are tree trunks and roots chopped at the stump. Made from glazed ceramic, this object also hovers in a strange temporal space of old and new. The lampshade made from human hair, reminiscent of fetish, or the Nazi lampshades made from tattooed flesh, pull surrealistic impulses from a seemingly benign source, making the object more a fetish god of worship from Africa than a European household object. Other Icons are similarly cross referenced and culturally twisted, "in search of someone to lead, in search of someone to follow", takes the iconic image of the Joseph Beuys fat chair and transforms it into a slab of meat. During one of his performance works Beuys famously asked people, "show me your wound", in doing so not only offering some kind of group therapy, but also setting himself up as an iconic leader of the soul, an untouchable art god. Isaacs returns in this piece to the bronze hand, to the questions of how we produce, support and finally destroy our icons, our culture, through acts of change and loss of memory.

John Isaacs has exhibited extensively on an international level. Exhibitions include - *Young British Artists VI*, The Saatchi Gallery, London, 1996. *Spectacular Bodies*, The Hayward Gallery, London, 2000. *Disasters of War*, KW, Berlin, 2000. *Minimal Maximal*, Museum of Modern Art Kyoto, 2001. *Mike Kelly's The Uncanny*, Tate Liverpool, 2004. *Les Grande Spectacle*, Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, 2004. *In the darkest hour there maybe light*, The Serpentine Gallery, London, 2007. *Rockers Island The Olbricht Collection*, Museum Folkwang Essen, 2007. *Symbolism und die kunst der Gegenwart*, Von Der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal, 2007. *Paul Thek in the context of contemporary art*, ZKM, Karlsruhe. Other Criteria, London recently published an extensive new monograph of his work.

John Isaacs lives and works in Berlin