

JOHN ISAACS

TRAVESÍA CUATRO - MADRID



Tom Waits believed that “you are innocent when you dream.” For his second solo-show in Madrid, Isaacs has assembled a group of recent and eclectic pieces that come to the same melancholic conclusion. But while in Waits’ song the golden promises of love and friendship that one made as a youth were

at least true at the time, in Isaacs’ exhibition the impossibility of utopias degenerates into a lament for the loss of innocence and the negation of faith. The artist explains in his own handwriting: “As we run before the tide we sweep up our children into our arms so as to explain why it was necessary to destroy so much for so little.” In fact, several of the works include a clear allusion to tears: the sculpture *Pool of Narcissus Weeping...* (2010) in which the mouth of a ceramic clownish face has been replaced by a beer tap accompanied by glasses; the turned-over frame in which someone has written “tears welling up inside” [*Tears Welling Up Inside* (2010)] and the print *Perhaps in the Emergent Lines You will Find Yourself* (2010), where a collaged eye seems to be the center of a gigantic drop. Isaacs, a generational peer of Damien Hirst — with whom he shares a liking for skulls as well as for long and pseudo-philosophical headings — became known in the '90s for his grotesque sculptures (in resin, latex and wax) of deformed human bodies and fleshy fragments. He also participated in Mike Kelley’s celebrated show “The Uncanny” with a furless, creepy looking monkey. In the current

exhibition, he reaffirms his wish to point out the paradoxes and inconsistencies that surround us, and displays dream-like imagery and a recognizable bitterness. A rickshaw made out of a child’s tricycle and a leather armchair, or a megaphone whose handle has been substituted for that of a gun and plated in gold, transport us to a world of surrealistic and conflicting juxtapositions in which we can feel free to cry for our lost innocence.

Emma Brasó



Above: JOHN ISAACS, *You Are Innocent When You Dream*, 2010. Installation view at Travesia Cuatro, Madrid. Left: JOHN ISAACS, *Pool of narcissus weeping* (moving closer to a spiritual and transcendental god of a likewise sadness), 2010. Mixed materials, 180 x 93 x 80 cm. All courtesy Travesia Cuatro, Madrid.

