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pawel althamer
MAMA

june 4 - july 30, 2016

exhibition opening
friday, june 3, 6-9 pm

We are pleased to announce the fifth solo exhibition by Pawel Althamer (b. 1967) at the gallery, on view June 4 to July 30, which will take the form of a diorama-like, large-scale installation created especially for the gallery's space.

With this site-specific work, Althamer returns to the traditional arts of plaster casting and ceramics. In advance of the exhibition, the artist worked with plaster specialists from the Pergamonmuseum in Berlin to create a cast of his own body. The resulting form serves as the basis for his seated self-portrait that is at the center of the exhibition.

Self-portraits have been a prominent component within Pawel Althamer's oeuvre. For his thesis work at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, Althamer exhibited his life-sized sculpture *self portrait* (1993) next to a small monitor, which played a ten-minute film showing the artist in rear view as he ran nude into the woods. The juxtaposition of presence and withdrawal in this early work can also be found in his new self-portrait. Despite the engaging physical presence of the portrait, it defies direct face-to-face confrontation with the viewer. The gaze of Althamer's likeness is aimed downwards, concentrated on his hands as they shape a small sculpture: a figure of his mother. Around his self-portrait, the artist has created a fanciful scene – the gallery's floor is covered in a mixture of clay and dirt, while plants and birds animate the landscape, which is cut through by a footpath for visitors.

Sculpture has for Althamer always taken on a performative element, by which the process of creation becomes an integral part of the work. Contrary to the static nature of classical sculpture, Althamer's work is self-reflective and constantly developing. This principle has led to his creation of room-filling installations that recall nineteenth-century dioramas, which, with their stage-like showcases, serve as points of entry to unknown, often exotic worlds that he psychologically imbues with a variety of references. In Althamer's new installation, the artist employs pictorial archetypes that reflect on the essence of the human condition, the power of creative production and the potential of transformation.

Pawel Althamer was born in 1967 in Warsaw, where he lives and works. He has been the subject of numerous international solo exhibitions such as those at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2014); the New Museum, New York (2014); the Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin (2011); Secession, Vienna (2009); Fridericianum, Kassel (2009); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2006); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2001); and Kunsthalle Basel (1995). Althamer was also featured in two editions of the Venice Biennale (2003 and 2013) and the Berlin Biennale (2006 and 2012). A work by Althamer will be featured in the group exhibition *Common Affairs. Revisiting the VIEWS Award - Contemporary Art from Poland* opening on July 21, 2016 at the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle in Berlin.

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