

Steven Claydon | Giorgio De Chirico | Philip Guston | Thomas Houseago

SCISSAIO 8 December 2011 - 20 January 2012

Steven Claydon, Giorgio De Chirico, Philip Guston, Thomas Houseago.

'*Classicism*, in the arts, refers generally to a high regard for classical antiquity, as setting standards for taste which the classicists seek to emulate.'

Carlson Gallery is pleased to announce SCISSAIO ; an exhibition bringing together a group of cross-generational artists dealing with the language of classicism.

SCISSAIO invites us to consider the 'classical' elements in each of these artists practices as well as their conflicting impulses towards the canon. Reverence and admiration is filtered and stained by irony, decay, cynicism and parody. The past is at once loved and mocked by each of the artists in the exhibition.

On one hand, Steve Claydon's sculptures reference the language of antiquity, on the other hand they leave the audience puzzled by their oddity. In *'Pitted Trophima'*, an industrial barrel used to transport olives substitutes a pedestal, whilst the figure's heroic air is undermined by the wax surrounding it. A wall drawing centred around an enigmatic disjointed male figure introduces the show.

Giorgio De Chirico is known as the founder of 'Scuola Metafisica'. A Giorgio De Chirico *'Autoritratto con tavolozza'* from 1954 plays with the criticism associated with his late work as well as showing the artists struggling with inspiration and lost in a melancholy gaze. The self-portrait engages with ideas of self-mockery and parody. *'Lotta di Gladiatori'* from 1928 presents a fight between two faceless figures whilst two enigmatic 'uomini-statua oggetto-' stare at the scene.

In the late 1960s, Guston became frustrated with abstraction and began painting representationally again, but in a rather cartoonish manner. Following the dismal reception of his new figurative paintings, from October 1970 to May 1971 the artist and his wife lived at the American Academy in Rome where he painted the four works on exhibition. Saturated in deep pinks and salmons, Guston's cartoon-like pictures evoke numerous aspects of the ancient and modern Roman cityscape and Italian art.

Trading bronze and marble with plaster and other found materials, Thomas Houseago's sculptures are at the same time imposing and fragile, heroic and clumsy.

'Untitled (Boy on Plinth)' exhibits the way it is made as well as being rescued from abstraction through thick pencil marks. In *'Untitled'*, the protagonist awkwardly stands on a wooden pedestal staring with a blank eye at its surroundings. Not a head nor an armour, the sculpture leaves us questioning its status.