

Press Release

RENEE SO

18 January - 25 February 2012

Private View Tuesday 17 January, 6-8pm.

Kate MacGarry is pleased to announce Renee So's second solo exhibition at the gallery.

Identified by its bulbous shape and the moulded face of a bearded man, Bellarmine was the English name given to the stoneware vessels imported from Rhineland, Germany from the 1500's to the 1700's for storing ale or wine. They later also came to be used as 'witch bottles' in the Elizabethan era –holding a boiled concoction of urine, fingernail and hair clippings with iron nails and pins– to protect oneself against witchcraft.

Bellarmino ware was initially very well executed, with the face on the vessel thought to represent a 'wild man' found in popular European folk traditions of the period. As the vessels were mass-produced for the English market by less skilful potters, the mask became progressively less naturalistic and more stylised until it developed into forms nicknamed the Bellarmine. The name 'Bellarmine' is in reference to Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino (1542–1621), who was strongly opposed to the Protestant church, and perhaps in mockery of the Catholic prohibition of drinking.

The work in this exhibition recalls the history of anthropomorphic ceramicware with their gradual stylization and abstraction over time and their multi-purpose function. The bulbous rounded form of the jug becomes transferred to the beard and the hair, and the simplified face becomes a mask devoid of specific facial features. In some sculptures, two Bellarmines become one by turning one upside down in a similar fashion as a King on a playing card or in varying degrees of rotation.

So works with ceramic and wool, creating sculptural and knitted portraits that suggest a multiplicity of lineages and styles. Her ceramic busts are built piecemeal from the base upward, borrowing conceits from military and aristocratic portraiture, theatre costuming, and ritual masks of ancient civilizations. Often crowned by curled wigs that seamlessly descend into honeycomb beards, So's faces are structured by browlines reminiscent of gladiator helmets and facial features scoured into the clay surface like primitive artifacts.

RENEE SO born 1974, Hong Kong, lives and works in London.

Her work has recently been included in: Keno Twins 5, Barriera, Turin; first show, Kaliman Rawlin, Melbourne (both 2011); Keno Twins 4, Villa Merkel, Esslinger, Germany; Keno Twins 3, Galerie Susanne Zander, Cologne; Newspeak: British Art Now, Saatchi Gallery,

London (all 2010); Jean-Luc Blanc: Opera Rock, CAPC - Musee d'art Contemporain, Bordeaux (2008) and SV07, Studio Voltaire, London (2007).
So also had solo exhibitions with Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland (2011); Uplands Gallery, Melbourne (2010) and Kate MacGarry (2009).

For more information please contact the gallery: mail@katemacgarry.com, 020 7613 0515.

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RENEE SO

Born 1974 in Hong Kong, lives and works in London.

Solo Exhibitions

2012

Renee So, Kate MacGarry

2011

Barbuto, Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland, New Zealand

2010

Renee So, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

2009

Renee So, Kate MacGarry

2008

Renee So, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

2003

Close Knit II, Studio 12, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne

Close Knit, Craft Victoria, Melbourne

2002

Simple Pleasures, Gallery 4A, Sydney

Flock Culture, Studio 12, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne

2000

Inspirational Contents of Living, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne

Insects (in collaboration with Nathan Gray), TCB art inc., Melbourne

Group Exhibitions

2012

Group Show, Spazio Cabinet, Milan

2011

Keno Twins 5, Barriera, Turin

First Show, KalimanRawlin, Melbourne

2010

Keno Twins 4, Villa Merkel, Esslingen, Germany

Newspeak: British Art Now pt.2, Saatchi Gallery

Keno Twins 3, Galerie Susanne Zander, Cologne

2009

Jean-Luc Blanc: Opera Rock, CAPC, Musee d'art Contemporain, Bordeaux, France

2008

Swans Reflecting Elephants (Renee So, Varda Caivano, Rose Wylie), Kate MacGarry

Revolving Doors: an exhibition in memory of Blair Trethowan, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

3am Eternal, Alexandre Pollazon, London

2007

SV07, Studio Voltaire, London (selected by Polly Staple, Christabel Stewart, Stuart Comer)

Neointegrity, Derek Eller Gallery, New York

2006

The Small Painting Show, Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita State University, Kansas

Satellite, Shanghai (curated by Richard Thomas)

Family Resemblance, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne

The Schanck Show, Cape Schanck, Melbourne

Meeting Place, Keeping Place, The Arts Centre, Melbourne

2005

A Group Show, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney

A Re-Constructed World, Linden – St Kilda Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne (curated by Jan Duffy)

A Short Ride in a Fast Machine 1985–2005, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne

Echoes of Home, Museum of Brisbane, Brisbane, Cairns Regional Gallery, QLD; Orange Regional Gallery, NSW; Fremantle Arts Centre, WA; Geraldton Regional Art Gallery, WA; Ivan Dougherty Gallery, College of Fine Art, NSW; Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, NSW; RMIT Gallery, VIC (curated by Christine Clarke)

2004

The Infinite Fill Show, (curated by Cory Arcangel), Foxy Productions, New York

Xin Nian, Response Gallery, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Asian Traffic, Gallery 4A, Sydney (official Biennale of Sydney event), Esplanade, Singapore; Today Art Museum, Beijing; Duolun Art Museum, Shanghai; OCTA Contemporary Art Museum, Shenzhen; Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong

2003

Contemporary Collectors Benefit Auction, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney

The Freedman Foundation Exhibition, Sir Hermann Black Gallery, University of Sydney

Calibre Art Project, Calibre, Sydney

We Don't Charge For Looking, Block Gallery, Sydney

2002

Gertrude Studio Artists, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne
Departures, BUS, Melbourne
2001
Gertrude Studio Artists, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne
Yarns, Jewish Museum of Australia, Melbourne
Tougher than Art, First Floor, Melbourne
Sample, Kinki Gerlinki / Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne

Education

1993–1997 BA Fine Art, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne

Awards

Australia Council – London Studio Residency, 2004
The Freedman Foundation Travelling Scholarship for Emerging Artists,
Craft Victoria Artists' Grant, 2003
Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces – Studio Residency, Melbourne, 2001
Australia Council Grant – New Work, 2000
Pat Corrigan Artists' Grant, 2000

Selected Bibliography

2011
On the World Stage: Renee So, Pavel S Pys, Australian Art Collector, Issue 55, Jan-March 2011,
p.117
2010
Charles Saatchi unveils a new Britart generation, Helen Sumpter, Time Out London, November
11-17, p.55
Material Return, Claudia Clare, Ceramic Review, Jan/Feb 2010, pp.50-3
2008
Nine heads and the difference in eyes, Jennifer Higgin, Uplands catalogue
Renee So, Uplands Gallery, Dylan Rainforth, The Age, 20 April 2008
Renee So, Uplands Gallery, Megan Backhouse, The Age, 19 April 2008
2007
When the Curator Is Also an Artist, Go Ahead, Expect Surprises, Holland Cotter, The New York
Times, 09 August 2007
2006
Beauty, Shadow-Play and Silhouettes, Rhana Davenport, Art and Australia, Summer 2006
2005
Knitted Masks: Renee So, Aaron Seeto, Object Magazine #47, August 2005
Echoes of Home, Joanne Besley, catalogue
2004
Xin Nian, Anonda Bell, catalogue