

For three decades now, Thomas Schütte has developed an oeuvre of great consistency, though diverse in terms of form and content: reflected and sensuous, occasionally complex, poetic and full of humor, always a bit subversive but never injurious. Today he is among the contemporary artists of international renown.

Since the 1980s Schütte has become known especially for objects and models of an architectural character. It has only gradually become apparent that, in parallel with these, an equally rich range of sculptures and drawings has emerged revolving around the human body.

It is this aspect of the oeuvre to which the Fondation Beyeler exhibition is devoted. It shows Schütte to be one of the most fascinating artists of his generation. He takes up the tradition of figurative sculpture and develops figures and heads whose direct appeal and manner of execution make them definitely of today. Whether hand-sized ceramic pieces or four-meter- high iron sculptures, Schütte's figures and heads are in a strange way both alien and familiar, opposite numbers capable of moving us profoundly.

The masterful interplay of large and small, monumentality and intimacy, has for many years now brought Schütte's pieces into the public space, where they are visible to all, whether visitors or casual passersby. Outdoor sculptures will be featured in the show as well, continuing a Fondation Beyeler tradition.

Drawing also runs like an open path through the artist's oeuvre. The watercolors and drawings, whose sketchiness and occasionally dreamlike beauty have the effect of divorcing them from the material gravity of the sculptures, impressively demonstrate the ease with which Schütte changes media while continuing his investigation into a deeper understanding of being human. The exhibition will include several series of drawings which are central to the artist's theme of the human body.

Born in 1954 in Oldenburg, Germany, Schütte lives and works in Düsseldorf, where he attended the Düsseldorf Art Academy from 1973-1981. Schütte has received many distinguished awards, including the Golden Lion for his presentation at the 2005 Venice Biennale. The important shows of recent years include exhibitions at the Reina Sofia in Madrid (2010) and at the Haus der Kunst in Munich (2009). Exhibition curator is Theodora Vischer, Senior Curator at the Fondation Beyeler.

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