

Mathis Gasser's *Inhabitants (Spaceships)* – oil on canvas, 270 x 200 cm – takes as its source a meticulously constructed 'starship size comparison chart,' uploaded as a jpg to the underground animator's forum deviantart.com by a German science fiction pundit, username: DirkLoechel. The vast diagram catalogues against a black field, widely appropriated images of several hundred space vessels which have appeared throughout the canon of science fiction (a narrative mass incl. literature, film, cartoons, video games, board games). Over the course of several years, the chart was published in drafts, which DirkLoechel's enthusiastic online community would collectively edit, providing detailed queries regarding the identification of various vessels, and strings of requests for additions to be made. Now finished -- and freely available to print in high resolution -- its captions, which can be read in close-zoom, include, for example: '*Sonic the Hedgehog*, Doctor Eggman, Egg Carrier, 789 meters'; '*Independence Day* / City Destroyer Invasion Mothership / 24,000 meters (approximate)'; and, at the edge of the image, beside the legend ('1 pixel = 10 meters'), appears one 'Real World' vessel, the 'International Co-Operative Project / International Space Station ISS / 100 meters.'

A monochrome plaster sculpture – also titled *Inhabitants* – features an erect stone slab, salvaged from a deserted courtyard near the artist's studio in the outskirts of London, collaged with a model ship (resembling a quintessential British imperialist clipper, e.g. Cutty Sark), buried into the base of the work, at ground level. The slab's façade – a simple carving in low relief, typical of much public sculpture which populated 1950s postwar community centers – depicts a congregation of women, in robes and sandals, standing atop a cluster of clay huts, palms outstretched, gazing stoically towards the heavens.

Ships embody a driving human necessity to chart spatial frontiers – not just carriers of people, explorers, but also of ideas. Ships are roaming microcosms of grounded societies (that often threaten the explored). Cixin Liu – in the second volume of his *Three Body Trilogy* – describes the universe as a 'Dark Forest,' a parable in which countless discrete civilizations exist, huddled around fires, shrouded in black, communities of silent hunters; according to Liu's 'Cosmic Sociology,' these civilizations can exist in peace, so long as they remain ignorant of each other; the moment they trace evidence of other life in the forest, it is inevitable that the civilizations will feud, attempt to eliminate the other.

*(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)*