

Press Release

Nick Renshaw

'Kupfernickel/Terrestrial Beings'

6th January to 7th February 2007

Opening: Saturday 5th January, 2007. 16.00 hrs.

Nick Renshaw (1967, Yorkshire, UK) had a very productive year in 2006. Not only was he invited to spend three months making work at the European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC), the innovative centre for ceramic research in Den Bosch, earlier in the year he was also artist in residence at the Akademie voor Kunst en Vormgeving/St Joost, also in Den Bosch.

He describes his latest work as a 'refinement' of his former practice. These figurative sculptures are also produced in a series, but there are some significant differences. In this current show the emphasis is on the 'clothed' aspects of the human figure. Some of the sculptures are coated in what looks like a thick chocolate glaze, whilst others have a surface reminiscent of cotton wool. Not only do these diminutive figures invite concern, they also allude to how human beings protect themselves from danger. The shiny, bright yellow glaze on one figure is reminiscent of the protective gear worn by fire fighters, and the matt white glaze of another suggests totally enclosed overalls or the kind of garment used to protect against toxic substances. Such apparel is also used to prevent contamination of forensic evidence, which gives the impression that these anonymous figures are disaster workers unearthing crucial data. In subtle ways, Renshaw alludes to both the imagined and real dangers faced by the consumers of news. It is as if he is making visible the effects of constantly watching the daily broadcasts.

Renshaw first hand coils his figures then uses the mould-press method to construct the works. "It allows you to get a history of the piece," he told me. The surface glaze is what differentiates each sculpture, however, and he treats each one "like a blank canvas". Many of the figures have narrow, unglazed areas to delineate the edge of clothing or eyes, noses and mouths, whilst others wear what look like muddied football boots. Like his previous work, they also have an 'uncanny' feel, as if they could come to life at any moment. With their implacable arms moulded to their bodies, a few figures seem resolute and steadfast, like goalkeepers protecting the net from an incoming ball. It also becomes apparent that Renshaw's current work is a muted commentary on contemporary masculinity. In their 'team kit' or sou' wester coloured yellow gear they brave the elements or try to save us from unmentionable threat.