

PRESS RELEASE

Huma Bhabha
Players

26 February – 15 April 2012



In both the six sculptures from the mid-1990s, and the six new drawings created for the exhibition *Players*, Huma Bhabha reinvents the human head, deconstructing and reconstructing an archetype in which she gathers and transforms various art-historical typologies: from the African, Oceanic and carnival masks to those worn by the actors/dancers in the Indian theatre, from the grotesque faces of Expressionist painting to the demonic, hybrid features we may find in the characters of science-fiction movies or the Marvel comic books.

The practice of inscribing a face with multiple meanings is also evident in Huma Bhabha's recent pastels of imaginary portraits which in their iconography hark back to and build on precisely her masks of the 1990s. These masks were technological portraits of archaic beings, constructed using papier mâché and found materials, including plastic cables and vacuum cleaners hoses, almost as remnants of special effects from science-fiction and horror films.

These sculptures did indeed constitute the first significant emergence of Bhabha's artistic personality, from which she slowly progressed to the architectural heads and figures that have characterized her more recent work, these too fashioned from found materials but with surfaces in painted clay, and in various states of deformation and fragmentation.

The drawings mark a return to an expressionistic mode of depiction of fantasmal faces; for them Huma Bhabha is again seeking inspiration from two very different sources, tribal art and science-fiction, combining them to arrive at a new kind of figuration. The artist constructs the human face as a site in which all the possibilities of the expressive can be played out: it's a story that started with German Expressionism, even earlier with Munch and Ensor, and to which Picasso and Bacon later contributed further iconic complexity. Bhabha has created, in her own words, a gallery of "*Players ... masks for what kind of ritual? gathering? or tournament? Lions, warriors, clowns, monsters ... all mashed up into some kind of twenty-first-century synthetic plaster, mutated and reinvented as a new/old race.*"

Accompanying the exhibition is a catalogue published by Silvana Editoriale, with an essay by Mario Diacono. The volume also includes a text by the anthropologist Giancarlo Scoditti who explores the notion of the mask as an expressive form which in many tribal cultures can be related to a mental image that reveals itself in a ritual context: a subtle game of cross-references to something other than what is visible.

This exhibition is part of the Collezione Maramotti's ongoing programme of occasional displays of works by invited artists which then become part of the permanent collection, the aim being to combine the activity of enhancing the collection's holdings of artworks through new acquisitions with that of promoting the public's enjoyment of those works.

Private view (by invitation only): 25 February 2012, 6.00pm.
The artist will be present.

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The exhibition is free and can be visited during the normal opening hours of the Collezione Maramotti:

Thursday and Friday 2.30pm – 6.30pm

Saturday and Sunday 10.30am – 6.30pm

Info

Collezione Maramotti

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Huma Bhabha **Biography**

Huma Bhabha was born in 1962 in Karachi (Pakistan), where she grew. She lives and works in Poughkeepsie (NY, USA).

She never formally studied sculpture, but used to paint and draw as a child, in her house full of artbooks, encouraged by her mother, also an artist.

Following her aspiration to study art, Bhabha moved to the United States in 1981 to attend the Rhode Island School of Design, graduating in 1985. In 1989 she received her MFA from Columbia University, where she met her husband, the artist Jason Fox. She has been living in New York ever since, although she returns regularly to Pakistan.

After her studies, Huma Bhabha started her artistic career: her works are exhibited in the most important museums and galleries of the world. She won the Emerging Art Award of The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum.

She had solo exhibitions at: Aspen Art Museum, Aspen (2011); Rhona Hoffman, Chicago (2011); Salon 94, New York (2010, 2007); Grimm Fine Art, Amsterdam (2009); The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield (2008); ATM Gallery (2006, 2004). Moreover she took part in group exhibitions at: Nascher Sculptural Center, Dallas (2011); Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh (2011); SMAK, Gent (2010); White Columns, New York (2010, 1996, 1994); Whitney Museum, New York (2010, 2009); Saatchi Gallery, London (2010); Stedelijk Museum Bureau, Amsterdam (2010); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010); Paula Cooper Gallery, New York (2009); *Gwangju Biennale*, Gwangju (2008); The New Museum, New York (2008); State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (2007); Royal Academy of Arts, London (2006); P.S.1, Long Island City (2005, 1992); Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2002); MOCA, Los Angeles (1994).

Her artworks are present in the collections of important international institutions such as: Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Saatchi Gallery, London; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The New York Public Library, New York.