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Art Review: Photographer Asger Carlsen's Solo Exhibition "Hester"

Asger Carlsen: Sculptor With A Camera



Artist Asger Carlsen in front of one of his sculptural photographs. Photo: Danilo Sierra

BAPs visits "Hester" in Berlin, the latest from photographer Asger Carlsen, leaving us with doubts of whether he might really be a sculptor in disguise!

True story: last week one of my colleagues here at BAPS asked if I would be attending the opening of "that photography exhibition" this past Thursday. She was referring to "Hester," the latest from artist [Asger Carlsen](#). "No," I told her, "I can't since I'll be going to a sculpture exhibition happening at the same time." This was my uninformed response since, after being immediately taken by the visuals of the work inside the press release, I noted the trip to [Dittrich & Schlechtriem](#) in my itinerary without further questioning the content—I wanted to be surprised. And surprised I was, for it would turn out that we were both referring to the same exhibition.

Bodies Reconfigured

Asger Carlsen is a visual alchemist. Formally, his photos read as a combination of documentary photography and the photographic documentation of sculptures. And by combination, I really mean a complete synthesis of these two elements into one. The subject matter is always the body, but it is matter that has been molded, twisted and collaged into recognizably unrecognizable things. Yes, they are paradoxes. His exquisite use of Photoshop to reconfigure body dynamics is impeccable, bringing the end result to an uncanny encounter: the photo of an impossibility taken with a single camera shot—or at least the illusion of such.



Stunned Lukas (L) and Tim (R), two art enthusiasts amidst Carlsen's body of work. Photo: D. Sierra

What I found most enjoyable in his pieces are their seemingly endless points of entry. At the visual level one can stand in front of his work for prolonged periods of time following the crevices, fruitlessly attempting to find the seams, or tracing the constellations of beauty marks and moles on a figure's back. Even more enjoyable is to go beyond the photograph and attempt to contextualize the sculpted bodies: who (or what) are they, where do they come from, what's their purpose, are they squishy, is their creator as mad as Dr. Frankenstein or as mischievously playful as Sid from *Toy Story*?



Art lovers Nicky Broekhuysen, Julia Hötte, & Moritz Weber enjoying the show. Photo: Danilo Sierra

I asked Carlsen, attempting to find some sort of psychoanalytic understanding in his response, a vague question: If your photographs were not photographs, what would they be? Without hesitation or third thoughts, he replied, "Definitely sculptures." I could've guessed that one. If my psychoanalysis does not fail me (and most often it does), I would diagnose Carlsen as a closet sculptor—one that happened to get stuck using a photo camera. But certainly for the better, "Hester" is an unrecognizably recognizable heck of an exhibition. You know, a paradox.

- [Dittrich & Schlechtriem](#) – Asger Carlsen "Hester" –February 1st - March 16th, 2013
– Tues-Sat: 11am-6pm [Price range of works: €2,900-€4,200]

Article by Jovanny Varela-Ferreira