

STEPHEN WIRTZ GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ULRIKE PALMBACH

New Work

Exhibition dates: April 29-May 30, 2009. Opening reception for the artist, Thursday, May 7, 2009, 5:30-7:30 PM

Stephen Wirtz Gallery presents an exhibition of new objects and installation-based works by Ulrike Palmbach.

Palmbach is known for creating uncanny, psychologically charged objects using soft materials, such as surplus army blankets, muslin, and beeswax. With this exhibition, she has expanded her repertoire of materials with sculptures painstakingly carved from solid blocks of wood. These vaguely figurative objects seemingly exist in states of lethargic flux and inertia, defying the unyielding qualities of the material from which they were created. Other objects in the exhibition reference more familiar forms—sewn fabric objects that resemble cardboard containers and rolled up newspapers. Taken together, these works present a fable for uncertain times, a commentary on the particular burden of accumulation and the anxiety that comes from never having enough.

The fabulist nature of the exhibition is driven home in a new work titled “The Big Bad Wolf.” This piece depicts a larger than life shadow puppet of a wolf, which appears to be projected onto an ordinary blanket. Referencing instinctual fears of becoming prey, it can be seen as representing an omnipresent evil—the metaphorical “wolf at the door”—a presence that is as illusive as it is threatening, one perhaps exaggerated by fear and paranoia.

Palmbach’s recent works spring from an inner world, existing in a languid state of transition. The wood objects are organ-like, familiar yet non-specific. They are “boneless,” without supportive inner structures, and seemingly yield to their own gravity. They can be seen as expressions of a psychological state made dough-like, heavy and passive in the face of uncertainty.

Although many of these objects seem to be made from soft materials, they are not. Initially a temporary version of the form is created from modeling clay, a non-permanent malleable material that is easily shaped by whimsy in this spontaneous and playful stage of the work process. At a certain point, this experimental state of “play” is left behind and the object is translated into a permanent solid shape. The form is carved out of wood, mocking its previous state. This transition from one material to another enables the realization of the unconscious as a tangible object.

Ulrike Palmbach was born in Sindelfingen, Germany, and received her BFA from San Francisco Art Institute. In 2008, Palmbach’s work was included in “Comme des betes,” at Musee cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne, Switzerland, and in 2005-2006 her work was selected *T-Turin Triennial Threemuseums: The Pantagruel Syndrome*, an exhibition of international artists curated by Francesco Bonami and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev.

Stephen Wirtz Gallery is located at 49 Geary St., 3rd Fl., San Francisco, CA 94108, (415) 433-6879, Gallery hours are Tuesday-Friday, 9:30-5:30, Saturday 10:30-5:30.

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