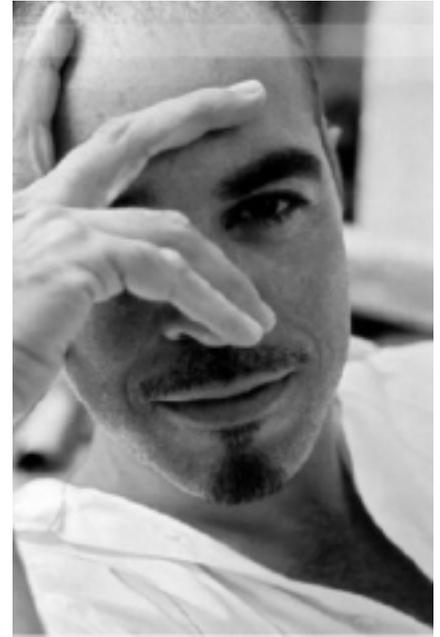


## Cabeza Vainilla, Cabeza Córdoba, Cabeza Chiapas

Javier Marin (Mexico City, Mexico)

**WHO MADE THIS SCULPTURE?** Javier Marín was born in Uruapan in the Michoacán region of Mexico. From 1980—1983 he studied at the National School of Visual Arts, Academy of San Carlos (UNAM) in Mexico City. His original focus was on painting and graphics, but he later concentrated on working in terracotta, resin and bronze. Since 1983 he has presented more than 50 solo exhibitions and has participated in more than 200 collective exhibitions in cultural spaces in Mexico, United States, Canada, Central America, South America, Madrid, Paris, Milan and Venice. Marín represented Mexico in the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003. He currently lives and works in Mexico City.



1



2

**WHAT IDEAS ARE BEING EXPLORED IN THIS**

**SCULPTURE?** Javier Marin's sculptures make a profound impression whenever they are exhibited. The gigantic heads of polyester resin and iron appear as if rendered in clay. They are the color of the red clay of the earth, terracotta, a material with special significance to many cultures. They suggest remnants or fragments of some ancient monument to unknown heroes. The forms look like they were dragged through the streets at some distant time, brutalized and left to rest or be mused upon.

The realistically rendered severed heads retain their dignity and emit a sense of history, suggesting both strength and decay. Duality is everywhere in Marin's heads. They rest precariously on edges, about to roll. They wear the mantle and dress of another time; maybe Conquistadores, Aztecs, Mayans or the faces of Marin's native Mexico, yet all are shaped in the style of Spanish Baroque sculpture.

**HOW WAS THIS SCULPTURE MADE?** Using bronze, resin and specific techniques such as scratching and drilling, Marin leaves evidence of process: a method which has become identifiably "Marin".

**HOW DOES THIS WORK CONNECT WITH THIS**

**ARTIST'S OTHER WORKS?** In his works, Marin employs the human figure as the basis for his formal language. Emotional power ripples into any space they occupy. It is a mysterious and defining aspect of a master skilled with the media, anatomy, distortion and scale. Marin's work is magnificence, soul, dignity, profound strength, compassion and suffering. As the artist puts it "I am happy-anguished".

Marin deals with multiple themes, ranging from the fragile nature of human existence to the



3



4

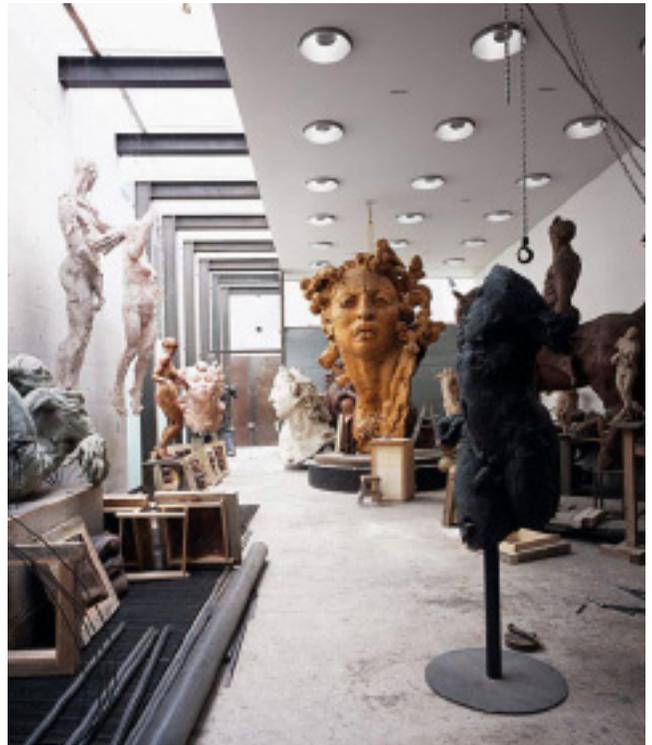


5

condition of man capable of transforming the world. The conceptual universe of Marín is baroque, but he also refers to the monumental art in the pre-Columbian period in Mexico. Marín is fascinated by the symbols and attributes that can still be found in Mexico. As an artist, Marín lives in the world of colonial baroque and its associations with Bernini and Michelangelo as well as pre-Columbian art.

The facial features of his work are ethnic and the skin colors are tones of earth cultures. These might be faces of the Aztecs or Mayas of Mexico that have been shaped in the style of Spanish Baroque sculpture. These possibly speak for many people of the world who have too quickly and too violently been pressed into the modern age. Marín's work shows a conflict, an inner battle, but also the result of aggression. Sometimes figures are tied together looking startled or wounded. We occasionally see fragments of bodies indicating that the battle can also be fought at the level of life and death.

There are aspects of Marín's art that are modern; his approach to sculpture is direct, not cushioned by irony. Like North American and European contemporary artists, he is speaking about decline. He approaches his work from dual perspectives revealing both a degradation of beauty and the beauty of suffering in dignity. They contain two perspectives, just as the synthesis of two cultures might result in two very different interpretations of historical events. His aesthetic is uniquely Mexican: the classical anatomy is opposed to the aggressive, confident handling of the clay which is modern and Voulkos-like. The figures have powerful musculature and large features often balanced with great delicacy of their fingers, toes and hair.



6



7

TO LEARN MORE:  
[www.javiermarin.com.mx](http://www.javiermarin.com.mx)

**WHO PUT THIS SCULPTURE ON DISPLAY IN RICHMOND?** This sculpture is part of Vancouver Biennale 2009-2011 Exhibition. The Vancouver Biennale is a non-profit charitable organization that celebrates art in public space. Each exhibition transforms the urban landscape into an Open Air Museum, creating globally inspired cultural experiences where people live, work, play and transit. The Biennale features internationally renowned and emerging Contemporary artists that represent a diversity of cultural perspectives and artistic disciplines including sculpture, new media, performance works and film. The objective is to use great art as a catalyst to transformative learning and social action.

The Vancouver Biennale also creates supporting public programs, events and publications including the award-winning BIG IDEAS Education program, the International Artist Residency Program inspired by Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream", the CineFest LIVE documentary film festival and the Tour de Biennale and BIKennale arts & culture cycling events.

**TO LEARN MORE** you can search the terms **BIENNALE**, **PUBLIC ART** or **OUTDOOR SCULPTURE PARKS** on-line. Also Visit the Vancouver Biennale website at [www.vancouverbiennale.com](http://www.vancouverbiennale.com)

#### IMAGE CREDITS:

- 1 Artist portrait; Artist
- 2 Artist with *Cabeza Vainilla*, *Cabeza Córdoba*, *Cabeza Chiapas*; Artist
- 3 Artist studio; Artist
- 4 *Cabeza Cabeza Vainilla*, *Cabeza Córdoba*, *Cabeza Chiapas* (installation); Dan Fairchild
- 5 *Cabeza Cabeza Vainilla*, *Cabeza Córdoba*, *Cabeza Chiapas*; Dan Fairchild
- 6 Artist studio; Artist
- 7 *Haque Sculpture*, 2009; DeVos

Author: Katherine Tong  
 Editor: Debbie Berto  
 Designer: Julie Rudd