

# EMMA WOFFENDEN AND CHRISTOPH ZELLWEGER

## BIGGER THAN THE REAL THING

25th March to 1st May 2010

Emma Woffenden and Christoph Zellweger, both questioning and leading in their original craft disciplines of glass making and jewellery, now come together to create a discourse around bodily expression and contemporary or perhaps ancient neurosis. Friends and colleagues since meeting at the RCA in 1991 they are artists who strive with concept and production of often immaculate and original works.

Zellweger's work uncovers societies pathologic relationship with their own and other people's bodies. Considering life extension, penis extension, chemical control of body and mind, a general shift from the natural towards the artificial. "People use each other's complexes for their own economic benefit. Large industries flourish on the suffering they nurture...." Irritated by such facts, he starts the intense production of exquisite powerful objects, loaded with emotion, sensuality but cut through with social comment.

Paralleling this and experiencing artificiality as a dead state Woffenden expresses despair at our alienation from primal intuition, strength and desire; searching for a reunion through art. She uses sexual conflict, isolation, aggression, release, as tools and subjects, resulting in difficult, chilling, but beautiful sculpture. For the artist and audience she hopes for little revelations and steps towards self-awareness. "I want to find the ancient universal in our condition, I start with the personal, but often shared experience, working my way out".

Zellweger and Woffenden are influenced by the modern artificial state of our body and psyche. Both are thinking about the distancing and distortion of the real, true or natural life. These personal, social and psychological issues are insistently made present asking "How can you be alive now and not feel this stuff?"

Critically rigorous, manually able, visually talented and refreshingly unfashionable, these artists show a deep interest in process and materials. Unclassifiable objects born at the cutting edge of their practice, are appreciated by a minority group but never in the main stream.

---

**Emma Woffenden** (England/France): Born 1962, Emma Woffenden studied at West Surrey College of Art & Design (1981 - 84) and the Royal College of Art, London (1991 - 93). Emma trained as a glass maker and has always used diverse complex making techniques and mixed media. During a commissioned three part installation 2003, titled No Horizon, she developed kinetic pieces which produced shadow animation and sound. Her award winning Transglass collection designed together with Tord Boontje has been produced since 1997 and is currently manufactured by artisans in Guatemala. Her work has been exhibited in Europe and the USA, collections that hold examples of her work include: The British Council, Brussels. Shipley Museum and Art Gallery, Shipley. Ernsting Glass Museum, Coesfeld, Brighton & Hove Museum, Brighton. Broadfield House Glass Museum, Kingswinford. The Victoria & Albert Museum, London. The Wellcome Trust, London. British Crafts Council London. The Macmanus Galleries, Dundee. Arts Review Collection, London. Transglass can be found in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Corning Glass Museum, Corning, British Council Collection London. She is represented by Marsden Woo gallery London and lives and works in London and rural France.

**Christoph Zellweger** (Switzerland/England): Born 1962, Christoph is one of the most thought provoking contemporary jewellery artists in Europe. Trained as a goldsmith and model-maker Christoph Zellweger worked for several years in the trade in Switzerland before attending the Royal College of Art in London. Exploring the boundaries of his original discipline he has tested several formats, including installation, performance and intensive material research, also developing work at the European Ceramic Work Centre in Holland. In 2007 he published Foreign Bodies (Actar, Barcelona/NY), which extends the definition of body adornment today. Besides running his studio and exhibiting internationally, he lectures in Europe's leading Art Colleges and holds a professorial research post at Sheffield Hallam University at the Institute of Arts. His work features in museums such as FNAC fonds national d'Art Contemporain, Paris; MIMA Institute of Modern Art, Middlesborough / Contemporary Art Society, London / Crafts Council, London; Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg / Schmuckmuseum, Pforzheim, Germany; Swiss National Museum, Zurich, Switzerland; and private collections in Europe and in North America. Beside other prizes in England, Belgium and Germany, he has won the Swiss Federal Prize for the Applied Arts three times.