

Nick Hornby: Atom vs. Super Subject @ Alexia Goethe Gallery, 7 Dover St - Central

To 9 July: www.alexiaGoethegallery.com



'I never wanted to weigh more heavily on a man than a bird' (Coco Chanel), 2010

No, the author of 'Fever Pitch' and 'About a Boy' isn't a sculptor on the side. Rather, the other - younger - Nick Hornby has a solo debut in which he blends typically three sculptures (all in full and to scale) into one by virtualising a merger on computer, then turning the result into gleaming white marble resin. Hornby's 'trybrids', to adopt the term in Ossian Ward's catalogue essay, come in two strands which take advantage of Alexia Goethe's contrasting spaces: relatively conservative combinations of portrait busts to make composite muses upstairs; and more radical mergers downstairs. For example, the headless body and legs from Rodin's 'Walking Man', the full sweep of Brancusi's 'Bird in Space' (which one side-view ingeniously resembles) and the negative space from Hepworth's 'Form III' come together under a title which almost lists those components but is a quote from Coco Chanel: 'I never wanted to weigh more heavily on a man than a bird'. Any number of associations can then be brought to the sculptural elements plus title quote. Is it that Rodin failed to value Camille Claudel as a sculptor rather than a mistress, Hepworth wasn't given her deserved equal billing with Henry Moore in her lifetime, and Brancusi's striving for the ideal form reminds us how art in practice falls short in such matters as equality - just as in everyday life, in which differential expectations about appearance and weight are flagged by Chanel's quote? Perhaps, but Hornby - who chooses the components for their meaning as much as their form - says he is also interested in the origins of ideas, amateur genetics, the balance of the cooked and raw (he cites Levi-Strauss and the trickster tradition), the synthesis of genders, and more...

Paul Carey-Kent is the former Editor at Large of Art World magazine.