ALMINE RECH

Gavin Turk
En Face

Oct 30 — Dec 18, 2010 | Paris

Almine Rech Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition by Gavin Turk, featuring works of his new series *En Face*, which was recently presented at CAC Malaga. This series consists of a group of 72 clay busts resulting from an *interactive performance* in which a group of participants manipulated the still wet clay in order to transform it into a Surrealist "Exquisite Corpse." The exhibition highlights Turk's interest in questioning the role of the contemporary artist and of art in general and its viewers.

Gavin Turk's work consists in analysing and questioning the concepts of fame, authorship and originality that continue to affect our understanding of art and of artists' activities. Using a degree of playful irony, he reveals how an artist can transform the value of an object to the point of giving it the status of a work of art. Well known within his oeuvre are the sculptures of famous people such as *Pop* of 1993, a wax depiction of the punk singer Sid Vicious with the face of the artist and the pose of Elvis Presley from Andy Warhol's depiction of that star. Other notable works by Turk are the everyday objects such as *Pile* of 2004, a polychrome bronze sculpture of a huge mound of rubbish. Through such works Turk looks at the issue of how something can come to be considered art when it occupies an institutional space intended for such a purpose.

En Face presents the 72 busts deriving from his installation, created in an interactive performance that took place last April in the artist's London studio. For *The Bust Party*, as it was known, Turk invited a group of people who manipulated the wet clay of the 72 busts depicting the artist. The public thus became part of the creative process through being given the chance to add their own mark to a work in process. Turk's intention was to suggest the idea of art as authorless, the result of a collaborative effort by a group of people whose involvement was not just limited to the interpretative task of looking at the work but who could also touch it and put themselves in the artist's place.

The result was *En Face*, a title derived from the French word "en face", which Turk used to create a play on words in order to describe a situation in which the viewer is confronted with the work of art and is capable of extracting and re-printing his or her own personal mark directly onto it. Also notable are the titles that Turk has given to each of the busts and which are anagrams of his own name, again emphasising his interest in questioning the value of authorship and identity. These titles include *Raving Kut*, 2010, *Gavring Tuk*, 2010, and *Gun Irk Vat*, 2010. All use the letters of his name but rearranged to the extent that they barely relate to the original.

Gavin Turk (Guildford, UK, 1967) studied at the Royal College of Art in London, where he failed to obtain his degree after submitting a controversial work that consisted of installing a plaque with the inscription "Borough of Kensington/GAVIN TURK/Sculptor/Worked Here 1989-1991" in an empty room. His association with the *Young British Artists* movement and his consequent participation in the influential Royal Academy exhibition *Sensation* of works from Charles Saatchi's collection, in which Turk appeared dressed as a tramp, led to him becoming one of the most promising figures within the art world of the day. Gavin Turk still remains loyal to many of the principles that he defended during those years, primarily using sculpture, but also drawing, printmaking, installation and photography, to express his ideas on the art world and on artists