

clownlike onesie, wandering about the gallery, writing snippets of graffiti on a wall. At one point when I was here, he fetched a ladder and climbed into a tiny high-walled cubicle, bringing a book with him, which wasn't a great sign. He stayed there, unseen, for more than half an hour.

Yet in a way, Peake's inactivity, his lack of presence, points to the most interesting aspect of the show, involving his perennial theme of bodies and gender. *Testeen* (2018), a video projection inside a diaphanous, curtained-off area, depicts naked dancers. The tables in *Stroud Green Road* display various corporeal stand-ins or representations: plaster sculptures and neon-light outlines of organs and limbs, and spillages of blue or pink hair gel. The entire gallery is suffused in pinkish, fleshy light. It's in this context that Peake's "quest for identity" starts to make more sense—not in the fact of arriving anywhere in particular, but rather in the very yearning for some sort of physical coherence, for a sense of substance and stability that exists beyond the realm of mere signifiers and symbols.

—Gabriel Coxhead

## MEDARDO ROSSO Thaddaeus Ropac

While Tate Britain presented the rather bloated blockbuster "Impressionists in London," a much smaller show across town at Thaddaeus Ropac examined the same theme in *nuce*, by way of one of the twentieth century's most innovative modernist sculptors. If the medium of sculpture seems inimical to Impressionism's atmospheric effects, Medardo Rosso brought the two inexorably together,



Medardo Rosso:  
*Behold the Child*,  
1906, plaster  
coated with sealant,  
approx. 20 by 15  
by 13 inches; at  
Thaddaeus Ropac.

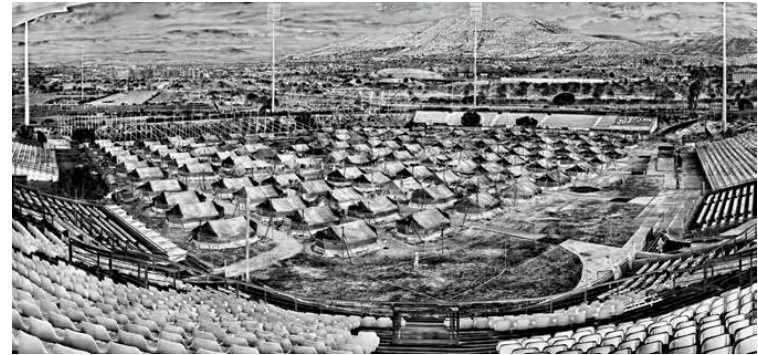
exploring the theme of bodies bound up with their environment and subject to the vagaries of light and time. Co-curated by Sharon Hecker, one of the world's authorities on Rosso (and author of a new monograph on his work), and Ropac's Julia Peyton-Jones, the show was the first to focus on his relationship to London, fleshing it out through drawings, letters, photographs, and a representative assembly of his most important sculptures. The artist—who was born in Turin in 1858 and relocated to Paris in his early thirties—traveled to London in 1896 and again (when he had a retrospective at the Eugene Cremetti Gallery) twenty years later, earning both British patrons and the attention of various critics. Hecker convincingly argues in the catalogue that the city inspired some of his most celebrated pieces, as well as the innovative ways he staged his sculptures and disseminated them through photography.

While developing his work in Paris, Rosso not only influenced Rodin (which the French artist was loath to acknowledge) but also drew on contemporary notions of realism. "Fewer Madonnas and more women in art!" Rosso declares in a short text translated for the catalogue. His representations of poor, ill, and elderly individuals distanced his work from the idealizing imperatives that had historically informed sculpture. His interest in marginalized subjects was of a piece with the coarseness of his style: his figures come into focus yet always seem on the verge of dissipating again.

Many of the drawings Rosso made in London—from sketches of the Royal Docks, café life, and a tube station to a graphite rendering of Trafalgar Square in which Nelson's Column is barely discernible amid a patchwork of shadows—lend context to his conception of sculpture as a suspension of a seemingly fleeting instant. That conception is epitomized in *Impression de Boulevard: Femme à la voilette* (Impression of a Boulevard: Woman with a Veil, 1895). The wax sculpture seems to show a fashionable bourgeoisie raising a veil above her head, though, as she is depicted with only the most rudimentary of arms, we can only guess at this. The veil itself merges with the top of her head as well as the surrounding space. Indeed, it proves impossible to differentiate the figure from the boulevard along which she strolls—an "impression" of both time and place that, like the woman's face, blurs into an anonymity profound in its ordinariness. The body's frontal orientation betrays a certain painterly sensibility on Rosso's behalf, as does the plaster support that props up the wax from behind, much like stretcher bars behind canvas. *Ecce Puer* (Behold the Child, 1906), made of plaster coated in sealant, reveals a young boy whose face appears as if seen from through a veil of light or haze. Among Rosso's most noted works, it also proved to be his last original sculpture (he would subsequently only recast earlier ones), and he completed it in London.

While Rosso employed a range of materials and techniques in his work, his subject matter remained focused on the nexus between figures and their ambient space. The Futurist artist and theorist Umberto Boccioni lionized the sculptor for his pioneering evocations of urban themes and aesthetic unfinished. Rosso has had an impact on numerous contemporary artists as well, including British sculptor Tony Cragg, one of whose works punctuated the exhibition. In the catalogue, Cragg proclaims that Rosso, a master of transience, "open[ed] the door more than anybody else" in terms of expanding figural representation.

—Ara H. Merjian



Richard Mosse:  
*Hellinikon Olympic  
Arena*, 2016,  
C-print on metallic  
paper, 50 by 104½  
inches; at Carlier |  
Gebauer.

## BERLIN

### RICHARD MOSSE Carlier | Gebauer

Hundreds of black-and-white photographs are pieced together to create vast, ghostly landscapes in Richard Mosse's recent series of large-scale prints, "Heat Maps" (2015–17). Continuing his engagement with technologies of war, Mosse employed a military-issue thermographic camera with a telephoto lens to document refugee camps throughout Europe from distances of around three to nine miles. The resulting photomontages thus interpret the ongoing refugee crisis through the temperature variations of sites where it is directly playing out.

In *Hellinikon Olympic Arena* (2016), tents set up in an Olympic stadium in Athens appear to huddle together, surrounded by tiers of empty seats. The image seems like an allegory for the dwindling public awareness of the crisis and its current status. The media furor that arose when it began in 2015 has diminished over time, though the numbers of displaced people have continued to grow. In March 2016, Europe made a deal with Turkey that effectively stemmed the flow of incoming refugees, with scores of people left in limbo in Greece. The tents occupy the majority of Mosse's composition, to desolate effect, but gradually clotheslines with garments hanging from them and a handful of humans become visible. The latter, due to the thermographic medium, appear almost bleached-out. It is as if they are overshadowed by the makeshift architecture, their presence (and plights) obscured by the substandard infrastructure. The image begins to recall the hell panel from Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, in which bodies seem to recede within the dark panorama that consumes them.

Mosse's camera technology alludes to systems of surveillance as well as to search-and-rescue missions, the works encapsulating the spectrum of reactions to the global movement of people, from negative to positive—with the former seeming to prevail at the state level, given the dissemination

of surveillance programs that focus on migrant populations. Mosse's expansive compositions—which stretch to more than thirteen feet across—engulf viewers, giving them the feeling that they themselves are somehow being watched, though this sense of scrutiny is counteracted by the remote vantage points. The tension that results points to the push and pull between the distrustful gaze that follows refugees (particularly by the right-wing media) and the distance kept from them when it comes providing asylum or meaningful solutions. Indeed, the exhibition's title, "The Castle," evokes Kafka's 1926 novel by the same name, where the protagonist, K., struggles to gain access to or acceptance by the enigmatic governing powers.

The show also included a series of smaller-scale, more closely shot images. These were stills from Mosse's 2015–16 three-screen video installation *Incoming*, which was not on view but which uses the same technology to portray refugees traveling by sea. Particularly poignant are an image of a life-jacketed woman recovered from a sinking boat and a shot of a group of near-on thirty people piled high atop a vessel along with suitcases and bags, their faces appearing veiled, with the camera registering mostly vague details (glasses, open mouths). It is as if they are not real people with actual lives they have been forced to abandon. As with Kafka's K., they are alienated from any meaningful governmental recognition, their legal right to exist under duress.

—Louisa Elderton

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