

## PRESS RELEASE

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**NOT VITAL**

**12+2+1**

**24, RUE DU VIEUX-BILLARD**

Art Bärtschi & Cie is pleased to exhibit a new selection of works by **Not Vital**, entitled *12 + 2 + 1*. The Graubünden artist returns to Geneva one year after his exhibition at the Cabinets Graphiques of the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire to present a remarkable series of portraits, two acrylics and a sculpture, testifying to his fascination with anthropomorphic representations.

The "Everton" series was realized during the first months of 2014 in Rio de Janeiro. These drawings, executed with oil sticks, are disconcerting. The spectator may recognize the roundness of an ear or the bone of a jaw, but his eye struggles to perceive the features and shapes of the model's face, which he instinctively seeks to grasp. His very name is intriguing. Read upside down, *EVERTON* is likely to lead us astray: *NOTREVE*, as if to remind us that Not dreams, over and over again. The recurring polysemy in the interpretation of words in Not's work continues, and also allows us to understand *NOT EVER*. Although on the edge of abstraction, these monochrome portraits are endowed with a singular power. They exude a fascinating human presence, weight and density. The spectator is sucked into a strange energy, dark but luminous.

We find the same economy of detail in the sculpture from the *HEADS* series. Not Vital knows, like no one else, how to go to the essential. In 2013, during a trip to Laos, the artist sees a very large Buddha head in stone on the ground. Struck by the delicacy, largely imbued with spirituality, that the object exudes, Not will make it the starting point for the *HEADS* series produced in China, in the studio he occupies in Caochangdi, north-east of Beijing. The "HEADS" of Not Vital are also very large and challenge by the spiritual dimension that emanates from them. One immediately thinks of the sculptures of ancient times, of the plastic vocabulary of primitive arts. But although the universality of the representation is obvious, these sculptures remain resolutely contemporary. The treatment of their surface, resulting from advanced technology, offers a reflective rendering that can hypnotize the viewer. There is a disturbing fluidity in this mirror effect. The eye wanders over the concave and convex areas of the work, enchainning the sensations of aspiration and projection. In the end, the charismatic presence of this work imposes a particular quality of silence, and invites the spectator to a peaceful meditation on the notion of form.

These recent works resonate with the two acrylics painted in 1987, which are immediately striking in their dimensions. Then, very quickly, the artist's gesture emerges, sure and energetic. Large brush strokes cross the entire surface of the work, constructing a subtle play of transparencies. Grey dominates, as is often the case with Not Vital. But the light always ends up piercing.

Not Vital was born in Sent, in the Engadine region, in 1948. A true nomad, the Swiss artist has lived and worked in places as varied as Beijing, Rio de Janeiro, New York, Lucca, Sent, Agadez and Chilean Patagonia. These places have always had a direct influence on Not Vital's artistic output, whose works have been shown at the MoMA and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Kunsthalle in Vienna and the Ullens Centre of Contemporary Art in Beijing, among others. In 2001 he participated in the Venice Biennale. A multifaceted artist, he is currently preparing a major exhibition at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park where he will exhibit paintings, as well as a collection of works in plaster, silver, gold and marble, as well as steel and bronze sculptures.

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