

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jaume Plensa: Nocturne

Nov 14, 2020 - Jan 9, 2021

Gray Warehouse
2044 West Carroll Avenue, Chicago

CHICAGO - Gray is pleased to present *Nocturne*, a solo exhibition of new sculpture by Jaume Plensa. Debuting nine of the artist's latest works in stone, glass, steel, and bronze, *Nocturne* explores the artist's range and mastery of sculptural portraiture. The exhibition opens at Gray Warehouse in Chicago on November 14, 2020 by appointment and runs through January 9, 2021.



Jaume Plensa, *Rui Rui*, 2019

In *Nocturne*, a word evocative of the night, Plensa navigates the symbolic dichotomy between lightness and darkness. The artist presents his newest body of work in a gradient of material density, beginning with the most substantial sculpture crafted from black basalt and bronze, and concluding with light, ethereal figures in stainless steel and Murano glass. Contemplating the extraordinary challenges of the present day in these terms, Plensa maintains, “no matter how long the night, the morning always comes.” Whether embracing or opposing the intrinsic qualities of his materials, Plensa’s exhibition of sculptural portraits symbolizes the potential for hope to emerge from a place of total darkness.

Commencing the exhibition is *Minna*, a nine-foot-tall portrait depicting a young woman with her eyes closed in a state of repose. Created from dark basalt stone, *Minna* is the artist’s largest work in the medium to date. *Nocturne* continues with a series of five bronze portraits—*Anna*, *Irma*, *Laura*, *Lou*, and *Rui Rui*. Arranged closely together as if in silent dialogue, each bronze head presents a uniquely textured surface, the result of being cast from the same molds the artist uses to form his steel mesh figures. Once cast in bronze, Plensa

hand-paints the surface of each work with a layer of white, carefully obscuring the original dark finish while elucidating the serene facial features of his subjects.

The two largest works in the exhibition are Plensa's most ethereal: delicately bent stainless steel wires construct the portraits of *Rui Rui* and *Julia*, delineating the faces of Plensa's subjects while simultaneously wavering in and out of legibility. With deep material awareness, Plensa offers the illusion of a weightless form, fabricating and rendering otherwise monumental works into light, airy apparitions. Through portraiture, Plensa's sculptures convey the transitory nature of the human condition, capturing his sitters in a single moment in time. As Plensa explains, "Every time I do a portrait, soon after, in a way, the person no longer exists." The exhibition culminates with *Silence*, an intimately-scaled portrait made from white Murano glass. Holding a finger to its lips in a gesture of quietude, the figure acts as a coda, concluding *Nocturne* on a final note of inner tranquility.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jaume Plensa was born in 1955 in Barcelona, Spain, where he presently lives and works. One of the foremost sculptors in the public realm, Plensa is the recipient of national and international awards including the Honorary Doctorate from Univeristat Aut'onoma de Barcelona (2018) and the Velazquez Prize awarded by the Spanish Cultural Ministry (2013). The artist's work has been the subject of numerous solo museum exhibitions, including MACBA: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; MAMC–Musée d'art moderne et contemporain Saint-Étienne Métropole, Saint-Étienne, France; the Venice Biennale; The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio; Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Yorkshire, England; and the Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas.

Plensa's prolific career has taken his work across the globe, including celebrated projects in such cities as Toronto, Los Angeles, New York, Calgary, Chicago, Montréal, London, Paris, Bangkok, Shanghai, and Tokyo. Recent public installations of the artist's monumental sculptures include *Dreaming* in Toronto's Richmond Adelaide Centre (2020), *Behind the Walls* at historic Rockefeller Center in New York City (2018-2019) and the Museo Nacional de Arte in Mexico City (2019-2020), and *Voices* permanently installed at 30 Hudson Yards in New York City (2018).

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