



Opening a Door

A letter to John Isaacs
from Erika Schlessinger-Költzsch



John Isaacs, Everyones talking about jesus, 2005, 2005, microcrystalline wax, epoxy resin, polystyrene, oil paint, latex, stage blood, 200 x 150 x 150 cm

I was both fascinated and confused when I met John Isaacs for the first time in his studio in Berlin some years ago. There were many interesting sculptures and reliefs scattered around in a large hall and it seemed like they were made by at least three different artists. When I asked him whether other artists worked there as well he said, yes, but as it turned out later it was a misunderstanding – he was referring to the whole building, but I was talking about his studio space within the building – however, in the beginning I truly believed it, because the variety of his work is not easily categorized.

In the meantime I have seen many pieces by Isaacs and they still continue to fascinate me in different ways. I find no better and more adequate way to express my undiminished interest in the artist's work than to write him a personal letter. With this I would like to express the thoughts that have been moving me while contemplating the work.

Dear John,

to write to you and about you, is like opening a door, a door which leads into many different worlds. There is no cliché that doesn't mirror you as an artist and as a person, and yet there is no cliché that you cannot simultaneously invalidate.

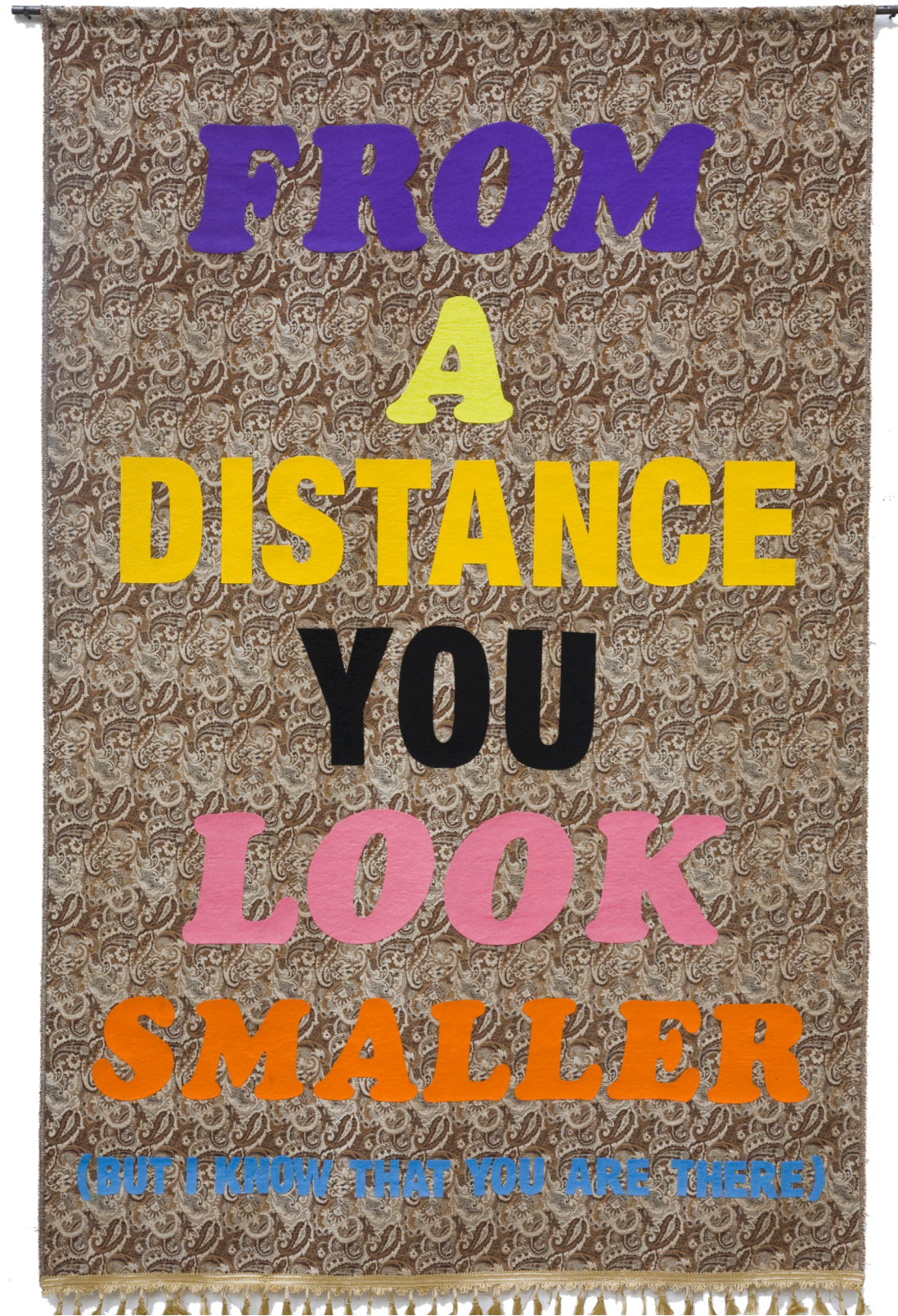
At times your choice of motifs and artistic style is virtually incomprehensible for the viewer. It is not only when one gets to know your work better, that it becomes clear that it is a total reflection of your personality. You embody and reflect many conflicting things and search for their acknowledgment. As diverse as your works are, you always stay true to your self. What is the connection between a monumental marble sculpture reminiscent of the early Pieta piece by Michelangelo covered by a cloth, a bloody piece with fin cut out of a shark's body, an old felt rug with colored letters, a unicorn horn with jeans, a female torso with the world map on its skin lying on a wooden box as if she were a river goddess, and an old master drawing of a hand mutating into a tree branch with twigs? Is it an aesthetic notion, a sculptural concept or the idea that everything is connected? It is the case that however diverse the works appear from one another, your oeuvre is focused, intense, and always engaging. The high and the low, spirituality and profanity, politically and socially relevant matters, the pretentious and the aesthetically ambitious, all are characteristics for your work's investigation.

You are a multiple personality as an artist – literally, not in the medical sense. You are as grounded as you are off the hook, as eccentric as focused, as careless as reliable, as excessive as reluctant. When I got to know you better I gradually understood your quest in all historical times, directions of orientation and places. There is no prejudice towards anybody or anything in your work. You are a very rare case, a loner of a special kind. «It is not easy being green», said Kermit the frog. Yes, John! It is not easy being John Isaacs.

But it is very exciting and challenging to delve into your work and its traces. For this reason I much appreciate and cherish your person and the work in which the rational and the emotional, the constructive and the organic, the subversive and the bourgeois find their places. You are an artist of our time and have so much to express. Thank you for that.

Erika





John Isaacs, From a distance you look smaller...but i know that you are there, 2009, felt, fabric, glue, steel, 210 x 120 cms



John Isaacs, If your dreams are not your own then how can you claim to own them, 2010, plaster, horn, trousers, 132 x 46 x 200 cms



John Isaacs, Untitled, 2019, glazed ceramic, wood, steel, 125 x 57 x 44 cms



John Isaacs, Untitled, 2007, pencil on antique paper, 46.5 x 36 cm