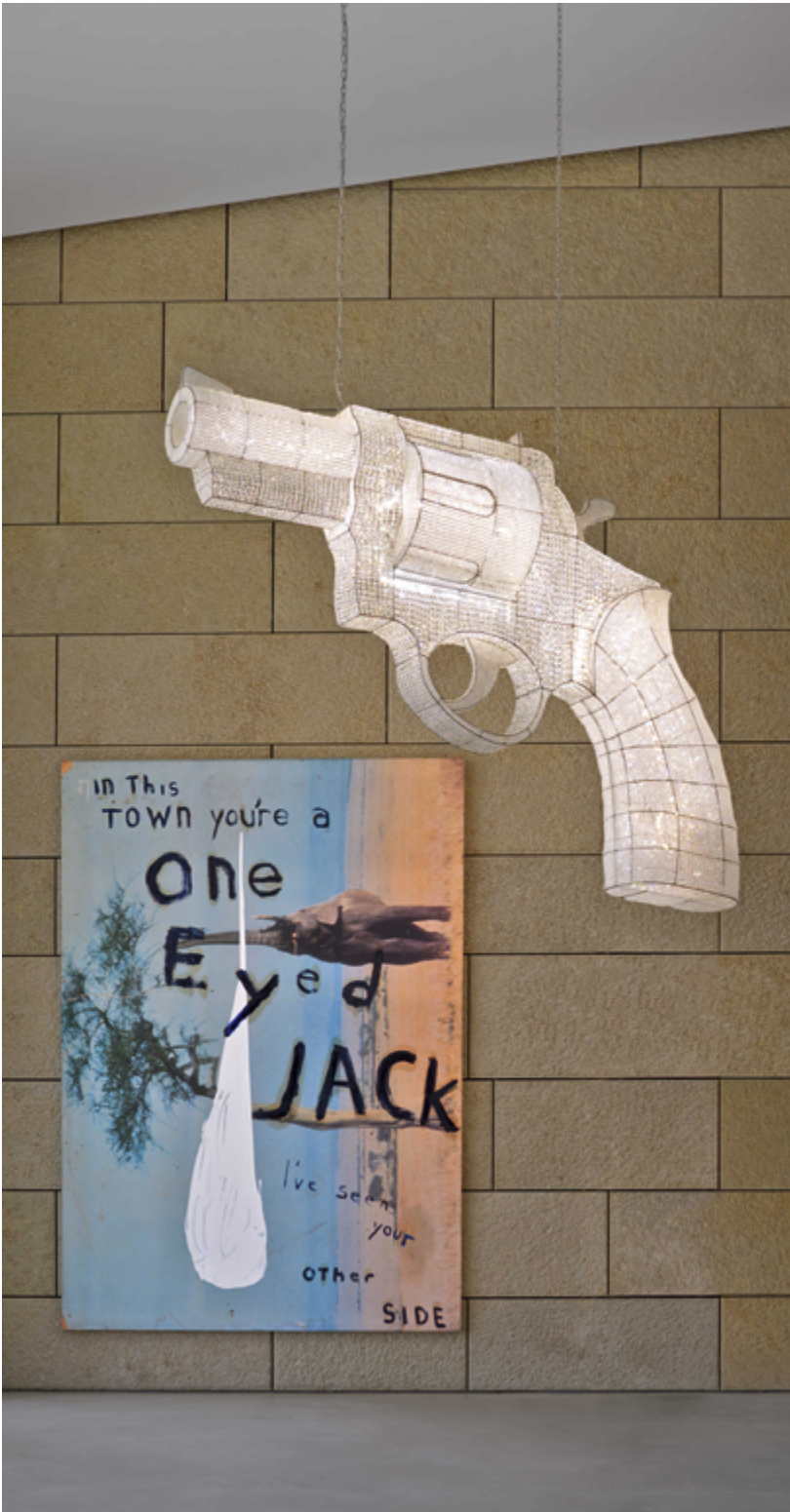


HANS VAN BENTHEM

LIGHT SCULPTURES



Gun, 2013

Dutch artist Hans van Benthem endeavors to capture images of the present, for eternity. With the help of valuable materials, he allows these images to solidify, as it were, to preserve the spirit of the day for the future. For this reason, Van Benthem is constantly in search of handed-down handicrafts and traditional materials in order to realize his works. As though tracking down species in danger of extinction, his path leads him to fascinating sites, such as those in Senegal, to find wood; in India for bronze works, Morocco for copper, China for porcelain, and the Czech Republic for crystal.

Hans van Benthem studied monumental painting at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague. He has since turned his technical abilities to large-format sculptures. In 1995 he began with the creation of sculptural chandeliers, which he prepared from the most refined Bohemian crystal. Since then he has created impressive light objects with which he moves freely between art and design, knowing full well that they are a source of ongoing discussion.

The oversized light object shaped like a pistol in the Nicola Erni Collection, for example, presents the transformation of a common hand weapon into an artistic work in crystal. Characteristic of Van Benthem's canon, it contains a heavily iconic and symbolic presence and bases its existence once again in the context of the installation: Before visitors enter into the collection building, the muzzle of the firearm points at them, commandingly, from above. The pistol as symbol of ultimate individual power, sits enthroned mightily and glamorously before the unusual private collection, like a bouncer deciding who to let in, like the huge crystal lion that Hans van Benthem recently created for the entry hall of the Dutch Ministry of Defense.

Due to our cognitive understanding of the subtle interplay of the energy-charged meaning carrier of a firearm, its active positioning, and GUN's seeming animation by the light radiating from it when it is turned on, very basic signals are set off in us: it challenges us to encounter sites and situations critically and with a lively spirit; what is certain, however, is that we are about to become immersed in another world.

Florentine Rosemeyer