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Thomas Houseago, *S-Bend Dancer*, 2009,
Mixed media on Tuf-Cal, hemp, iron, redwood, bar, 98 x 85 x 28 in (249 x 165 x 71 cm),
Photographer Fredrik Nilsen, Courtesy Michael Werner Gallery, New York.

THOMAS HOUSEAGO

ARTIST TO WATCH

In 2003, sculptor, Thomas Houseago, moved from Europe to Los Angeles with a purported \$300 to his name. A few years later, he sold almost his entire studio inventory to super collectors, Don and Mera Rubell (Miami), a turning point that since has led to gallery representation around the world and many museum shows, including the 2010 Whitney Biennial, The Artist's Museum show at MOCA LA, and a traveling one person exhibition that originated from the Modern Art Oxford, all in a span of eight years.

Houseago fully deserves the attention, as he breaks new ground with work that challenges many of the traditionally accepted (and lauded) tropes of sculpture. In his work one can see trace elements of Primitivism, Cubism, Futurism and Modernism, as he intentionally subverts form, volume and dimensionality; the artist mashes up the "isms" to create an aesthetic amalgamation that is uniquely his own.

The tense physicality of Houseago's sculpture is commanding, due in no small part to its size, but also to the raw materials: he uses

plaster, iron rebar, hemp fiber and untreated wood, fashioned in an unrefined manner that keeps angles jagged and surfaces coarse. His figures are intentionally messy and compositionally unbalanced. They seem to be coming alive before they are finished, or they are zombie-like, living in spite of decay. Either way, it is this uncanny hybrid energy that makes the work so arresting.

Now imagine the visual impact of a monumental figure standing 30 ft. tall, which the artist is creating for French collector, François Pinault, to be installed at the Palazzo Grassi for the 53rd Venice Biennale! Formidable—as is this artist's career.

Houseago studied at St. Martins College of Art and De Ateliers, Amsterdam. He lives and works in Los Angeles, where he is represented by L&M Arts, as well as Michael Werner Gallery, New York, Saatchi Gallery, London and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, with recent shows in Glasgow, Milan and New York. —KWT