

Art in America

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Hans van Meeuwen at Cristinerose

Hans van Meeuwen's *A Man's Height* (2007) was carefully positioned so that viewers immediately saw it through a succession of doorways when stepping off the elevator to enter Cristinerose's new space on 26th Street. The sculpture (polystyrene, plaster, wood and acrylic) made a strong impression, since it consists of a pair of bare legs and feet cut off just above the knee and even so standing just over 8 feet tall. The legs are oddly formed, the feet disproportionately large, the kneecaps diminutive in comparison. The toenails are neatly trimmed, the flesh blushed, and both feet are ever-so-slightly rolled to the outside, so that the stance seems shyly awkward.

The rest of the show—two other sculptures and 12 drawings—differ in specific imagery but represent life with a gently cartoony quality. Van Meeuwen's works are essentially deadpan, with a tenor of absurdity that ranges from melancholy to silly. You might think of Charles Schulz. There are far more comparisons in Dutch art, for van Meeuwen (b. 1959, Rotterdam) retains the good-natured humanity of much work from his native country, not altered by his 15-year residence in Cologne and his recent relocation to New York. He has shown extensively in

Europe and had a show of drawings at Cristinerose in 2006.

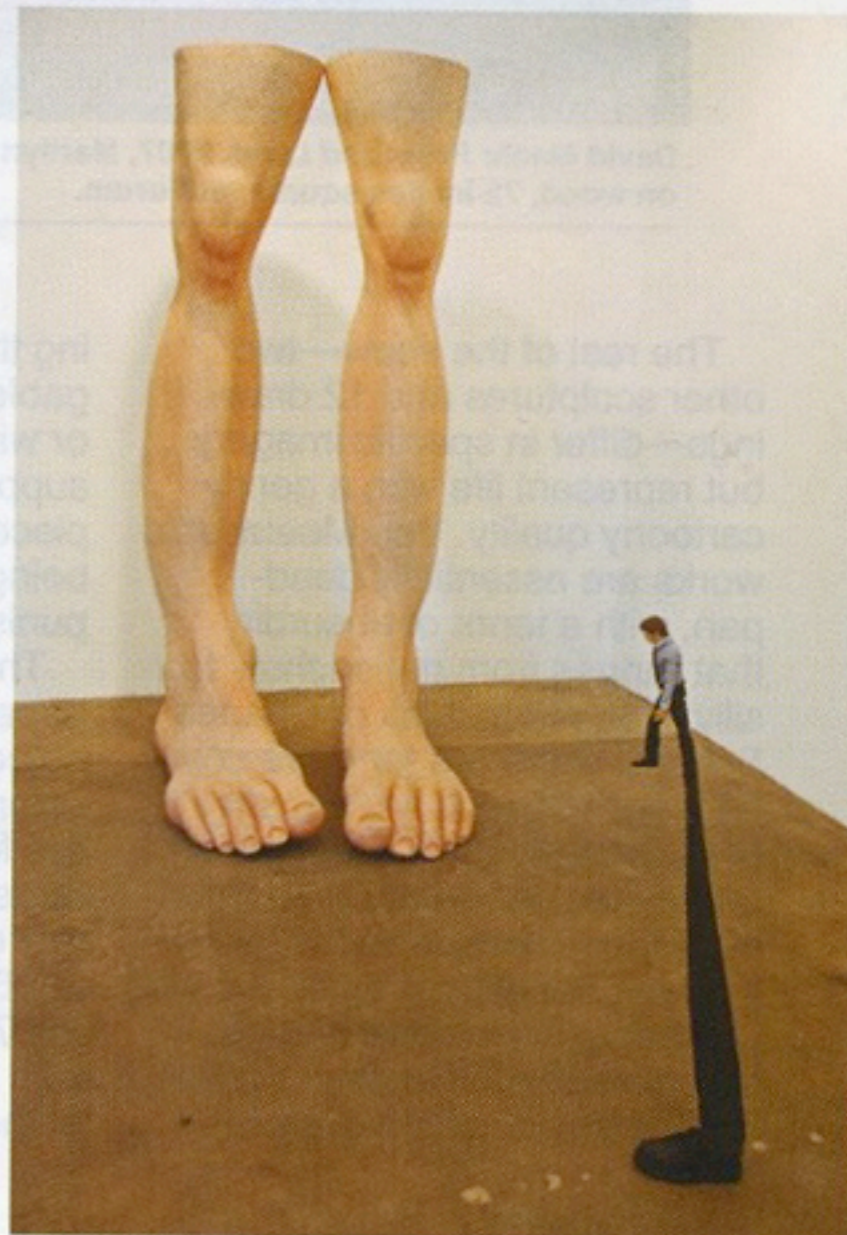
Another sculpture (plastic, fabric, wood, paint) depicts an attractive young professional man wearing a blue shirt, a tie and black oxfords. He would be maybe 10 inches tall except that one of his legs is about 3 feet long. The title of this 2008 work is *Jumper*, most likely because that's the only way the fellow could propel himself forward. Here again, disproportion is striking. That doesn't seem to be the case in the third sculpture, *A Doll House* (2005), easy to miss because it sat on a shelf about 9 feet up. This work (wood, fiberglass, fabric, paint) represents an ordinary child dressed in jeans, a denim jacket and rubber-soled canvas shoes, seated on a white-painted board. Concealing the child's head is an iconic gable-roofed house without doors or windows, which he (or she) supports with raised arms. The piece might allude to trouble, to being in the doghouse. If so, the punishment is self-administered.

The modest-size, pencil-on-paper drawings feature isolated objects or sketchy scenes, with color used as an accent. There are four quirky renderings of large, stylized dog feet, each in a different color and dated 2006. The others, most dated 2007, include a pair of binoculars with large blue eyes looking out of them and two men holding

tall standing mirrors in front of themselves as they face each other. These imply concern with visual information. But one drawing shows a three-story brownstone tilting into a sinkhole on a rainy day, and another presents a red convertible sports car raised up on legs and bare feet that emerge from its undercarriage; these might be the twisted imaginings of an urban dweller and frustrated driver.

—Janet Koplos

Hans van Meeuwen: *A Man's Height* (left), 2007, 98 inches high, and *Jumper* (right), 2008, 45 inches high; at Cristinerose. (Review on p. 198.)



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