# HIROSHI SUGIMOTO
## *Portraits*

This solo show by Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto (Tokyo, 1948) coincides with the prestigious festival PHotoESPAÑA'04.

For his second exhibition at our space, the gallery presents a selection from the photographer's latest *Portraits* series. Compared with Sugimoto's earlier shots of *Dioramas,* the figures from the new series vary in terms of scale. In these life - size photographs of the wax figures representing famous people they have been removed from their setting at Madame Tussaud's Museum in London. In doing so, the artist has created disconcerting black and white portraits photographed with a dramatic light and staged before a black background.

This representation series fundamentally reflects the subject of portraiture, bringing to the forefront the liaisons between painting and mechanical reproduction techniques. Sugimoto's photographic work echoes the relationship to representation in painting, as the wax models of historical personalities have been borrowed from the repertoire of depictions "from life" done by artists like Van Dyck or Holbein. In this way, Sugimoto's "portraits" reframe a reality that is detached by several stages from the original subject. Despite the likeness and lifelike resemblance, along with their dramatic quality that offers sensual pleasure, they are not the portraits of original personalities but merely of their wax reproductions; artificially created doubles illustrating a trace of history. The wax sculptor works with different parameters than a painter in terms of medium and thus tends to reinforce the dramatic qualities of the characters creating super realist effects in order to evoke their real presence given the museum setting. Using light reflections of casual appearance on the skin of the characters, Sugimoto evidences their original nature as wax figures. However, reinforced by the way in which the viewer looks at photographs and further conditioned by the perceptive "prejudgments" that characterize the spectator's previous experience with the medium, these portraits bring out in the characters a more "real" appearance; an authenticity that is far from the subject's original artificiality as a wax reproduction.

Sugimoto's work has received wide recognition across the world's major museums and galleries were it has been exhibited extensively, among other venues at the: Serpentine Gallery in London, The Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York, Kunsthaus in Bregenz, and in Spain a retrospective in 1998 organized by La Caixa.