

Ron Mueck's *Boy* at AROs



Photo Poul Ib Henriksen

The Australian artist Ron Mueck's (b. 1958) sculpture *Boy* has become one of the landmarks of the AROs Aarhus Art Museum. Measuring 4.5 metres in height and weighing in at 500 kg, the crouching youth of gargantuan proportions occupies the northern end of the museum's special exhibitions foyer.

In virtue of its size and life-likeness, *Boy* is a truly fantastic sight, and there were quite a few gaping eyes when it was first shown at the Millennium Dome in London in 2000, and later at the Venice Biennale in 2001. *Boy* was purchased by AROs in 2001.

Ron Mueck created *Boy* in 1999. It took the artist eight months to progress from a 40 cm high clay maquette to the present almost five metre high sculpture cast in glass fibre. The figure is executed with astonishing attention to detail: the surface of the skin, for instance, is utterly convincing with veins and hair follicles clearly marked. This hyperrealism makes the boy at once a living and compelling presence and yet alien and unreal. Ron Mueck's *Boy* is a major addition to AROs' collection of international contemporary art. With its highly realistic representation of body, the work inscribes itself into the neo-realist tradition, which moves from 1970s' names such as Duane Hanson, Claes Oldenburg and Robert Gober through to Jeff Koons in the 1980s.

It may be noted that the figure's crouching posture draws inspiration from the Australian aborigines, vigilantly scanning the plain for game.

In a generous gesture prompted by his enthusiasm for *Boy's* home at AROs, Ron Mueck has donated five sketches, a computer generated drawing and as many as five maquettes of the acclaimed youthful giant to the museum. The maquettes include two small versions of boy in rubber and clay, 43 and 28 cm high, respectively, and a big toe, which fully earns the epithet "big": it is 18 cm high, 29 cm broad and 22 cm deep!