

# The Extraordinary and Enigmatic Swiss Artist - Not Vital in the First Major UK Exhibition

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Gordana Sretenović. Teaching English and writing for a living. Obsessed with Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. Desires to travel the world and not have a permanent address. Occasionally writes poetry.

Yorkshire Sculpture (YSP) is proud to present the first **Not Vital UK exhibition** and the largest museum project by the exceptional Swiss artist. The extraordinary and enigmatic artist will present his **new works**, specially created for the indoor and outdoor spaces of YSP, along with the selection of the pieces he made in the last thirty years of his career. Not Vital's art is inevitably linked to Sent, his native small village in the Engadin valley in the beautiful Swiss Alps, yet his artistic practice is essentially nourished by **traveling** around the globe and thus collecting new experiences and adventures, along with the desire to explore and wonder. The artist is currently working in a number of elusive and far-away places, such as Bataan in the Philippines, Beijing in China, Flores in Indonesia, Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, and Patagonia, the region in South America, shared by Chile and Argentina.



Not Vital – Heads, 2014, Courtesy the artist Photo Eric Gregory Powell

## Nature, Snow, Textures, and Self-Portraits

Within the Underground Gallery are Not Vital's works on paper, paintings, and sculpture made from plaster, gold, silver, glass, and marble, proving Vital's exceptional **craftsmanship**. Works such as *Piz Nair*, executed in 2011, that depicts a mountain rendered in coal, *Marble Sled*, from 2004, and a glass *Snowball*, made in 2011, show his mastery in bringing the textures, reflections, and natural elements such as snow closer to us. **Animals** and **nature** are recurring themes of his work, seen in *4 Camels for Yorkshire* (2016) and *8 Halves* (2006), which is actually a cast of the rear half and hind legs of an animal repeated eight times. Self-portraiture is also crucial for Vital, seen in sculptures such as *Self Portrait with Six Ears* (2016), executed in bronze, and *Self Portrait as Village Idiot* (2012), made from plaster. He utilizes the notions of self-portraiture to disguise himself and to "test-run" different identities, thus investigating the notions of the imaginary and real self. This Not Vital exhibition is the **European premiere** of a series of **monochrome portrait paintings**, one of which was made especially for the gallery which measures eleven meters long and four meters high. His subjects are intimate and confrontational, as they are usually depicted in full frontal poses, and include his close friends, family, and studio assistants.



Not Vital – Makaranta (School), Agadez, Niger, 2003, Courtesy the artist, Photo Not Vital

## The Exhibition Experience

The viewers will surely talk about this exhibition for a long time since they will get the chance to walk along the glazed concourse which brings the **outdoor** and the **indoor** exhibition space together, a detail which is very symbolic in the works of Vital. A series of *HEADS* (2014) can be seen from the gallery, set against the dark green of the yew hedge. Other works such as *Let 100 Flowers Bloom* (2008), comprised of one hundred lotus buds on three-meter long stems, executed in stainless steel, span over almost the entire length of the Terrace at the YSP premises. *Big Tongue* (1996-97) look over the Yorkshire landscape and the Bothy Garden. A very interesting work, *80 Cow Dungs* (1990-) presents the natural waste of animals as the precious objects, thus bringing the animals and humans closer together in a perfect symphony with the land. Not Vital began the series of 1000 cow dungs during his trip to Nepal in the late 1980s when he saw that it was being used as fuel.



Not Vital – House to Watch the Night Skies, Aladab, Niger, 2006, Courtesy the artist, Photo Not Vital

## Not Vital Exhibition at YSP

Along the works mentioned above, the viewers will get the chance to see his other masterpieces, such as *Makaranta (school)* (2003), *House to Watch the Sunset* (2005), an interesting project of the artist aimed at building the same house on each continent using local materials, and many others. Not Vital is definitely the artist of a tremendous range, and his works showcase different cultures and depict the life in various countries. His exhibition at [Yorkshire Sculpture Park](#) will open on **May 21st, 2016** and run through **January 2nd, 2017**. There will also be an event later this year that will offer the rare opportunity to hear the artist talk about his exhibition at YSP. We cannot be more excited for this Not Vital exhibition, and you should definitely take the time to see his astounding works for yourself.

All images courtesy of YSP. Featured image: Not Vital – *Makaranta (School)*, Agadez, Niger, 2003, Courtesy the artist, Photo Not Vital