

ARTFORUM

Folkert de Jong

JAMES COHAN GALLERY

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Perhaps due to the popularity of Game of Thrones, Folkert de Jong's "The Holy Land" seems topical, despite that three of the sculptures are made from three-dimensional scans of Henry VIII's armor. Dispensing with his previous contemporary materials of Styrofoam and polyurethane, de Jong depicts three stages of Henry's life and hints at current global conflicts, including the outright medieval beheadings perpetrated by the Islamic State, in these patinated bronze relics. The green, red, and blue patinas of the bronze remains consistent throughout the triad, but each sculpture retains a distinct personality: the youthful king in *Fidei Defensor* (all works 2014), the virile middle-aged warrior with a bulging codpiece in *From Stately Throne*, and the bulky barrel-chested one in *Old DNA*.

Several of de Jong's works are encased in acrylic glass vitrines with colored panels, the most macabre being *The Knights Move*, a ghost of war with a snakelike body made from pigmented polyurethane foam adorned with a coat that de Jong's uncle wore in the Dutch navy. By incorporating a biographical aspect, de Jong contradicts the anonymity of this faceless soldier, bringing a human element to its nightmarish form. Notwithstanding the permanence of its bronze material, the freestanding *Babel's Maze* appears precarious due to the spindly base propping up its central element, a top-heavy cluster of cast machine guns with a decaying, greenish finish. Connected to a bowler hat and cane by a thin armature, the work depicts a violent empire potentially doomed to fail, as implied by these theatrical components. Although de Jong eschews any overt references in these works, one can't help but make associations with the current stances and policies of nations that take cues from religion, divine-right theory, and the philosophy of "might makes right."



Folkert de Jong, *The Holy Land*, 2014, patinated bronze, 86 9/16 x 70 13/16 x 35 3/8".

— Chris Bors