

# ARTFORUM

By Courtney J. Martin      September 2007

## Thomas Schütte

HENRY MOORE INSTITUTE  
74 The Headrow  
September 23–January 6



Lager (Store), 1978, wooden boards, paint, and varnish

Unseen for more than twenty-five years, Düsseldorf-based artist Thomas Schütte's work from the 1970s and early '80s, much of it executed while he was a student at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, is the focus of "Fake/Function." Not surprisingly, it seems like the key to understanding his development over the past three decades. The installations in the second gallery, *Ring* (*Rings*), 1981, a wall of flat, colored wooden circles and *Lager* (*Store*), 1978, painted boards lined up and stacked by color and height, use the forms and colors he continues to employ. In both, we see how the young Schütte stored color, filing it into a systematic vocabulary to be used, judiciously, to enhance form, as he does with his red, yellow, and blue glass structure *Model for a Hotel*, 2007, the most recent commission in the series of public sculptures on the otherwise-empty Fourth Plinth in London's Trafalgar Square.

Other works have a more opaque genealogy. The small, expressionistic portrait *Billie Holiday*, 1973, and *Grosse Mauer* (*Large Bricks*), 1977—individual paintings on wood that form a wall of bricks—simultaneously reveal Schütte's evolution from the painting that defined the generation before his own, and his appreciation of it, particularly that of his mentor Gerhard Richter and of Anselm Kiefer.

Throughout, he demonstrates his fascination with design and craft: The scrappy 1975 wallpaper installation *Grosse Tapeten* (*Large Wallpaper Hangings*) is the most intellectually literal, while the vinyl *Golden Ringe* (*Gold Rings*), 1981/2007, which are adhered to the facade of the institute, reconcile decoration's potential for beauty with fine art.