





As humans, one of the greatest sensations we can hope to experience is the touch of another human. To feel love, and kinship, and to be conscious of one's role in the cycle of life is the measure of our existence. Such feelings cannot be taught – they must come intuitively, and it is these sensations that dwell at the heart of Sam Jinks' moving art practice.

Within the extraordinary physical impact of Jinks' sculpture resides an imperceptively subtle voice. His works never articulate an unambiguous statement of intent, but rather they lead us to silently explore our own interiority. They prickle our consciousness of the greater cosmos – normally left to slumber – and help us to consider our place in the world. There is a pronounced preoccupation with humanity in Jinks' work – not just the tangible form of the human, which he renders with exquisite detail – but the 'humanness' of humanity; of consciousness wrapped up in flesh and blood; a light that burns from organic material.

Jinks works within the genre of hyperreal sculpture. His sculptures, however, are not merely lifelike, but transcend reality itself to speak of a higher order of realism. They capture things that we know to be real, but are beyond our cognitive perception. What we observe is not so much skin and hair replicated, but soul and unearthly spirit rendered substantive and material. The substance transcends tactility to herald our uncanny encounter with otherness. Death is ever present here. But only as part of the greater cycle of birth and life. Death is to be embraced as part of

a system that allows us to live, and to exist, however fleetingly, in the physical world. The many guises of death are manifest in Jinks' practice: as an elderly woman clutching a newborn baby to her chest; as a young man hanging motionless and naked from two pegs; as a suited man cradling the form of a dying elderly man. This quiet aura of mourning and sacred joy permeates all that Jinks touches, rendering ubiquitous matter as precious and divine.

Materiality is an unavoidably present factor in Jinks' sculptures. The process by which he masterfully manipulates clay into cast-silicone forms that precisely reproduce the human body begets wonder. That these works are not merely perfect but meticulously *imperfect* elevates their impact. Jinks is careful to include skin spots and blemishes, veins, and hair – both in its absence and excess. These facets set Jinks' figures at odds with classical sculpture, which sought to idealise the human form. We are presented, instead, with a realised form, which reveals not what we aspire to, but the simple sum of our parts: the slow decay of flesh, bone and ligament.

The case for imperfection is compellingly accomplished in *Tattooed Woman*, in which an impish elderly woman deigns to reveal the skin ornamentation that covers her naked chest. The potential for uncomfortable confrontation is easily allayed by Jinks, who saturates the woman's conduct with compassion, and we can feel only heartfelt empathy. Like *Tattooed Woman*, all works here share the unerring sensation that they have come into being not through the moulding of chemicals



above  
*Duo*  
 2008-2010  
 Mixed media  
 130 x 28 x 19cm

cover  
*Still Life (Pietà)*  
 2007  
 Silicon, paint and  
 human hair  
 160 x 123 x 60cm

and compounds, but through taxidermy – organic matter once exuding life and now stilled. This leads to the sensation that we are moving through a museum of actual human specimens, who betray a faintly surreal nomenclature.

This is especially so of *Hanging Man*, who in pose is reminiscent of Jesus Christ crucified. 'I've always liked that image', admits Jinks. 'It's the one perfect sculpture'<sup>1</sup>. Such works extract a resounding toll upon the artist, who describes the process of creating these works as 'draining'<sup>2</sup>. Jinks has also produced work for the film and television industry, but what sets his fine art practice apart is his sheer emotional investment. He forms a deep connection to his figures, which leads to a deep communion for the viewer; we detect not only the hours of painstaking labour but the immeasurable psychological outlay that Jinks weaves into his work.

What further sets Jinks apart from peers such as Ron Mueck is a commitment to a refined and highly original visual aesthetic. Here, the crispness of the figure becomes amplified. Jinks works to achieve not realism, but an elevated level of detail. Every mark is hand rendered, and each work is entirely unique – including those works born of the same mould. As much as the viewers that encounter the end product, each of Jinks' works has a charisma all of its own.

Within the spectrum of Sam Jinks' deeply affecting cycle of works, we may observe the full cycle of life. *Pietà*, *Hanging Man*, *Mother and Child*, *Tattooed Woman* and *Duo* each occupy a unique niche on the birth/death scale, while

soliciting a connection with all points in between. As observers we may fathom a profound personal insight through these works, while they simultaneously speak of the personal experiences of the artist. Such is the universality of Jinks' poignant practice. Anyone whose has been touched, who has loved or felt kinship with another human cannot fail to be affected in this remarkable company.

**Simon Gregg**  
Curator



above  
*Tattooed Woman*  
2007  
Silicon, paint and  
human hair  
90 x 55 x 45cm

inside left  
*Woman and Child*  
2010  
Mixed media  
145 x 40 x 40cm

inside right  
*Hanging Man*  
2007-2010  
Silicon, paint and  
human hair  
132 x 47 x 27cm

#### NOTES

1. Sam Jinks in conversation with the author, 5 August 2010

2. ibid



# Sam Jinks

# Pietà

**Sam Jinks**

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