

Coma

Mark Feary

Sam Jinks creates situations that encourage the viewer to be voyeuristic. The realism within his sculptural practice operates to create a sense of stasis, to disarm the viewer into a state of motionlessness. Presenting scenarios that initially confuse the viewer, who almost invariably perform a double take, the works operate as a kind of seduction of the viewer to approach.

It would be simplistic to deem this as a strategy of trickery, to fool and suspend the viewer's sense of reality, making them believe that what they see before them is truth. Realism is not the sought outcome, but a mechanism to create an intimacy between the viewer and the work. Its objective is not to deceive the viewer, but to implicate them within a relationship with strangers. The work, for all of its readily apparent attention to detail, is not solely about this rapport. An expanded reading could suggest that Jinks' work is concerned with our relationship to ourselves, to mortality, and how that in turn determines our connection to a wider humanity.

The works do not seek to traffic in the suspension of disbelief, leaving the viewer convinced the sculpture is indeed real. Instead they encourage a certain voyeurism, an opportunity for intimacy with an object we project our humanity onto. As a sleeping lover, a sick friend, a dying relative, we can unashamedly look upon every inch of the skin, every imperfection, every wrinkle of these figures without fear of capture. We look upon these individuals with a tenderness and scrutiny that for the most part evades our everyday relationship with

others. The works invite us to stare for *too* long, for our gaze to linger beyond what would normally be acceptable. The figures appear to be in a state of coma, not one within which they are in pain, and thus we feel sorrow, but in a state of peacefulness. In this instance we are able to look upon the figure with protracted attention, and project upon them, everybody we have ever sought to visually digest.

Yet these figures are not presented as exemplars of human physique in a Platonic sense, they are more vulnerable and hence, more approachable. They do not attempt to embody strength, valour or ideal physicality, but rather something of the everyday, a refreshing averageness in the face of an overwhelming infatuation with perfection. Through this, Jinks is able to question the viewer's relationship to beauty and desire, as he sheds the naked figures of their sexuality. In this sense, what the viewer experiences is a reflection upon the object, rather than an objectification of the form or comparison with the self. Within his capacity to create convincingly realistic physical representations, Jinks determines the work through the creation of near perfect embodiments of imperfection.

Jinks is able to heighten a tenderness between the viewer and the work through the closure of the figures' eyes, thereby removing the guilt of our conspicuous contemplation. This gesture emboldens our curiosity through the denial of the sculptures' ability to return our gaze. This provides a moment of privacy, of empowerment, of undisturbed reflection

upon the vulnerable before they awake. There is something in the absence of vision that presents these figures as less confrontational, marking them as almost complicit in our perversion. This lack of eye contact presents the figures as more solemn, perhaps even less determinable as an individual person to a degree of being symbolic of every person, as representative of a universalism.

Jinks is not the only artist who has created a practice that utilises sculptural realism to present ideas of the individual and the universal. Yet, this project marks a transition for the artist as he extends beyond the human figure, the heretofore mainstay of his practice. These works take one to a point where the work transcends beyond the physical form while not departing from the corporeal and ideological concerns that it represents. In this instance the artist presents a human figure through the filter of ancient myth, in an effort to elucidate our eternal apprehension of mortality.

The Anubis is a mythical Egyptian god with the body of a man and the head of a jackal, dog or coyote. This ancient god was charged with the duty of guiding the souls of the dead through the Underworld and into the kingdom of Osiris. Within the context of this white gallery tomb, the artist presents an Anubis, replete with animal head, yet departing from the black colouring synonymous with the head of the god. The black colouring is regarded as symbolic of the fertile soil of the Nile Valley, and almost certainly referential to the discolouration of the human corpse during traditional Egyptian burial preparations. The Anubis presented here has the fur and colouring of a traditional jackal, and thus

seems somehow more of this earth, and as such, more familiar and agreeable to a post faith audience.

This god, the weigher of hearts, digresses significantly from the active and dutiful stance normally afforded him in pictorial representations. In this instance it is presented as vulnerable, static, unwell, and through which, as mortal. The flatness and rigidity in which the Anubis is traditionally depicted, standing as man, or sitting as animal, is altered here through an entirely different composition. The Anubis is represented in a physical condition at a point wherein decomposition seems almost immanent. The figure appears as a frail remnant, as a shadow of its god status - as ready for death as the human souls it is normally charged with judging.

The Anubis, as patron God of Embalmers and Mummification, connotes the prolongment of life, even in its obvious absence. The artist's creation of an Anubis seems to be a tribute to the process of corpse preservation, yet confounded through the creation of a god, supposedly immortal, rather than a human. It is a monument to a god charged with the role of guiding us through death rather than a more personal and individual representation of the deceased. This is the creation of a mythical entity, bringing to life, in a physical sense, an almost forgotten, supplanted, even dead god associated with the gatekeeping of the afterlife. In this gesture, Jinks gives life to a figure who mythically decides how our death is played out. This undertaking seems one of reinvigorating the legacy of a figure whose role is that of determining legacy. In the absence of the judge, how are we able to establish

# KAREN WOODBURY GALLERY

ABN 97 218 520 851

whether we will be able to receive fair trial  
after the moment of our inevitable death?

more about oneself than the inherent  
qualities of the presented works.

Looking upon the Anubis is a series of human faces, looming down upon the viewer. While unable to discern their individual histories, their markings and the distinct signs of physical aging indicate histories and stories imprinted upon their form. Their markings are not the tattoos of prison, the seas, nor fashion but infinitely more organic and florid. Indeed they appear as growths encroaching upon the face, as a botanical takeover, perhaps alluding to the earth's absorption of the buried. Removed from their bodies, these faces appear as tokens of the dead, as merely portions of their entirety. They are the skin and structure of the face ripped from their body in a manner suggestive of anatomical specimens, wherein a head is representative of every head, a body is representative of every body. Yet their markings allude to an individuality and the creation of personal histories, even without the offer of an associated narrative. They are frozen moments and captured expressions rendered permanent and eternal. To this end, these faces operate as an extraction – of the face from the body, and of the body from life and memory.

With tender eyes we look upon the sleeping, the near dead, the dead, and the determiners of fate, Jinks provides us with an opportunity for our voyeurism to appear as studied contemplation. The presented works satiate a perverse pleasure in scrutinising the naked and vulnerable, as we project ourselves and others onto the dormant bodies. Whether one ascribes peacefulness or demise is a matter of personal conclusion, potentially revealing