

Tim Silver at Ten Cubed: A review of sorts.



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One of the greatest problems with contemporary art is its failure to connect with the public. Conceptual art, abstract concepts and edgy or gross aesthetics all have their enthusiastic audience, but generally, that audience is limited to collectors, artists and people already within the pre-existing 'art world'. The success of the work on show by Tim Silver at Ten Cubed is in part due to its accessibility. The response from the public has been overwhelmingly positive precisely because people tend to understand the work, and have a meaningful dialogue with it.

To begin the exhibition in the front window of the gallery is a portrait bust of the artist cast in wood putty, slowly cracking and decomposing as it defrosts from its original frozen state, destined to become unidentifiable rubble. Moving into the space, what initially strikes you is the sense of pressure and darkness of the room. Dark grey, almost black strips painted across the length of two sides of the gallery walls work to dim the usually bright space.

At the entrance of the room Tim's tree burls, cast in black resin it is mirrored at the other end of the space by his work "Untitled (Sleep)", another black resin casting of a tree branch with a slumped face hanging from its tip. Four long works depicting the form of Tim's body reclining in progressive states of decomposition run along one wall. Cast like the bust at the front from wood putty, the photographed form starts whole, clean and frosted, and ends cracked and slumped.

Directly opposite this work is a new sequence entitled "Untitled (Rory grown up)". These photographs show an upward gazing man, protectively cupping his genitalia, cast in blue watercolour. This sculptural work was originally exhibited under a dripping tap, to dissolve the form.

The photographs display the digression of the blue sculpture cracking, crumbling and ending with a violent image of a blue head dissolved on the floor, as if wounded by a bullet.

Moving further into the room leads to the work entitled "Killing me softly" containing photographic images of a figure cast in sand with a skeleton inside. Resting on the beach the waves dissolve the form to leave only the bones behind. There is a stark contrast between the images of decay and the beauty of beach environment.

The obvious themes of impermanence, time, death and the fragility of being permeate all of these works, but also the notion of replication is prevalent both in Tim's use of casting and photography. A construction for the purpose of deconstruction; the impact of the work is potent and the viewer is left to contemplate his or her own mortality in the identification with human form. The barren black branches of the sculptural tree casting "Untitled (Sleep)" echo the cracks of the late stages of Tim's putty sculptures. The tree burl (a form of scar tissue left from when a tree branch has been cut off) speaks volumes on trauma and loss.

These universal themes speak deeply and accessibly to the viewer. It is something we all take away in our own way from the imagery. People have spoken of the figures of Pompeii, the tree of life and other well-known icons of life and death, creating a popularist link.

There is a sweet melancholy in my mind when I view this work. Death and decay are natural and inevitable, and this work makes you understand that it can also be quite beautiful.

The show is on until the 7th of December at Ten Cubed Collection in Glen Iris, Melbourne.