

Gavin TURK

Ha ha ha!

GALERIE ALMINE RECH

JOLLY JACK TAR (LAUGH? I NEARLY DIED)

Echoing round the dusty old curiosity shop, the itinerant sailor, (a mechanical toy of fairgrounds and seaside piers) is caught in an eternal cycle of creepy laughter. Funny ha ha! rather than funny, weird, or is it the other way around. Bruce Nauman and Paul MacCarthy join Theseus, sailing off and leaving Ariadne abandoned on the island of Naxos. Slim Jim becomes Gentleman Jim, a drunken nomad in his Breton stripe, lost on the high seas.

WHAT IS IT THEY SAY?

A family in every port. Flirts with all cultures, belongs to none. A Merchant seaman, (an honourable trade), travelling the routes of global exchange, before those routes took to the air. Now, no more than a washed up Has Been. An Old Soak in his camp Gaultier/Warhol stripe garb and his Tussauds animatronic gimmickry. No longer able to satisfy the audience with a self portrait waxwork trapped in a casket like the Sid Vicious/Che/Bum characters inhabiting the Gavin Turk hall of fame. This one has to entertain ha ha ha!

NATION OF SHOPKEEPERS

An old sign propped at the back of the same junk shop, once proudly promoting its trade (perhaps a Grocery Shop or an Ironmongers?). Carrying the hand painted graphics of an era when slow and local was the only option. Now the Wild West advertises its business with the lights on the inside shining out. Back then the voice was quiet and scripted, our memories loaded with nostalgia.

THE LOTUS EATERS

Stranded on a desert island seduced by the fruit which brought forgetfulness and happy indolence, these fictional characters distracted Odysseus and his men. They forgot their friends and their home as nature's sedative took effect. Turk's strange plant cast in bronze and frozen into ageless patinated beauty.

DUCK RABBIT

Look twice and see things not as they seem: a Coup d'Oeil. This surreal object is an art historical quote. A visual marriage between Piero Manzoni and Meret Oppenheim. The birth of a fur ball: a visual idea that sticks in your throat.

THE 'MECHANICAL TURK' AND THE TROUBLED GENIUS

Edgar Allan Poe was the father of the macabre child of modernity, born a generation before Conrad sent Mr Kurz into the Dark Side. In 1836 he wrote a philosophical essay which was an exposé of a famously crafted piece of trickery. This 'mechanical' automaton representing a chess playing Turk, persuaded generations of important audiences into believing in a machine that could beat a human at chess. A spooky premonition of the advent of computers, this machine with its moving character (and hidden flesh and blood operator) fooled the public into believing that science could triumph over the conscious being. From the perspective of Poe, the world was still flat.

PRESERVING TEMPTATION FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN

When Eve offered Adam a bite of the apple all the horrors of reality entered their paradise. This innocent little fruit prevalent in western society, contained the drugs of desire and obsession. The discarded apple core is picked up from the dusty gutter, carefully preserved in precious metal and painted to look real.

CONTEMPORARY ARCHAEOLOGY

Alongside the fruit from the garden of Eden is another relic from our urban contemporary streets. A polystyrene cup once held liquid tea, the civilised drink of British Culture. Now crushed and discarded it has been rescued from the street and preserved. Immortalised in bronze and lovingly painted to look like its featherweight ancestor.