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**ART**

## Freudian slip: Gavin Turk invades Maresfield Gardens

*There's much for your conscious and subconscious to mull over in Gavin Turk's mischievous intervention at the Freud Museum, says Louisa Buck*



BY LOUISA BUCK  
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One of London's most atmospheric places is the [Freud Museum](#), home to the great man when he came to London in 1938 to escape the Nazi annexation of Austria and where he remained until his death in the same house just a year later. But although Freud only occupied 20 Maresfield Gardens for a short time, this red-brick Hampstead villa is stuffed with his possessions and has become a place of pilgrimage for Freudians worldwide, especially the famous study and consulting room, complete with the iconic carpet-draped couch upon which a multitude of his patients reclined.

With admirable open-mindedness it has been the Freud Museum's policy over the past few years to invite key contemporary artists to make and show work in response to the big daddy of psychoanalysis. Sarah Lucas, Sophie Calle,



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The Metamorphosis of Narcissus, 2011

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sceptical about the claims of psychoanalysis, believing that as the interpretation of dreams was not based on logical, empirical facts it therefore could not be taken seriously as a science. So Turk mischievously stirs things up by not only inserting this famous doubting detractor into the heart of hallowed Freudian territory, but also by adding the mysterious egg which is both a physical fact while at the same time having a Magrittean, Surrealist incongruity.

To add to this ghostly or, in Freudian terms “unheimlich” (uncanny) – atmosphere, Turk has installed a large scale photograph of a coiling, twisting plume of smoke, rising like ectoplasm above the very sofa where Freud’s



Parapraxis, 2013

[Enlarge](#)

Mat Collishaw and Tim and Sue Webster just some of the major figures who have made memorable shows at Maresfield Gardens. Now it is the turn of [Gavin Turk](#), whose audacious intervention into this revered shrine is on view until February 7th and open between Christmas and New Year.

The house is already full of ghosts and Turk adds a few more. Standing in the highly charged domain of Freud’s study, just behind his desk with its weirdly human-shaped leather swivel chair and across from his couch, is a life-size waxwork of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, mysteriously holding an egg in the palm of his hand. Freud’s contemporary in Vienna, whose sister was even one of Freud’s patients, Wittgenstein was nonetheless

patients unleashed their unconscious thoughts and desires. This haunting and beautiful image is one of three installed throughout the house and recalls both Freud’s famously heavy cigar habit as well as our (Freudian) tendency to free-associate and read our own patterns and images from within its forms.

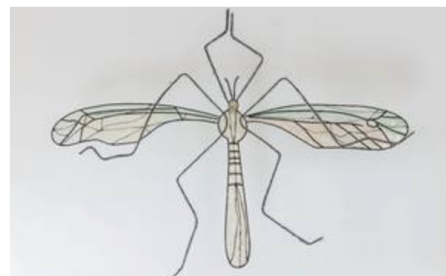
Above the mantelpiece in the adjoining library is an eerie video which presents Turk in one of the artist’s many alter-egos: this time assuming the guise of the Mechanical Turk, a famous chess-playing automaton that amazed the courts of 18th century Europe. With rich layers of reference the piece plays with and off the artist’s name and his ongoing interest in issues of authorship, identity and authenticity as well

as alluding to the Freud-fixated Surrealist’s practice of “automatism” to release dream images. Then of course there is also Freud’s famously keen interest in chess and its parallels with psychoanalysis.

Throughout this thought-provoking show, with gentle irreverence and in an inventive range of forms, Turk repeatedly questions this lovingly preserved shrine to Freudian theories, as well as the beliefs themselves. Lit up in neon on an upstairs landing – and shining out like a beacon to the street outside – are the words Ego, Id and Superego: the three components of the Freudian psyche; while installed in the hallway is a phallic granite monolith (actually an upended kerbstone) which visitors are invited to kiss. In the dining room Turk displays his own version of the Metamorphosis of Narcissus – giving Dali’s



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Hanging by a thread: Alexander Calder

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Parapraxis, 2013

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displays his own version of the Metamorphosis of Narcissus – giving Dali's title to this beautiful photograph of a vase of dead narcissus blooms, in tribute to the Narcissus myth that was also another favourite of Freud's.



Mechanical Turk, 2008-2015

[Enlarge](#)

Freud called the multitude of antique figurines from ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt and India which cover his desk and fill a host of cabinets within his study and library "my old and dirty Gods". In ironic response to this much-mythologised collection, upstairs at Maresfield Road Turk has

arranged his own desk from his studio, laden with his personal collection of small art works and cherished personal objects, complete with an institutional style plan identifying each piece. This creative exchange between an iconic figure and an artist, much of whose work is devoted to the examination of what it means to achieve this illustrious status, is both enriching and provocative. It breathes new life into this strange house of buried memories and dreams.

*Gavin Turk: Wittgenstein's Dream is at the Freud Museum until February 7. Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day; otherwise open throughout the Christmas period*

#### CONTACT

[www.freud.org.uk](http://www.freud.org.uk)