

Gavin Turk: Wittgenstein's Dream

ART



Critics' choice



Gavin Turk: 'Wittgenstein at Freud', © the artist

1/6

Freud Museum , Frognal Until Sunday February 7 2016

TIME OUT SAYS



DETAILS

DATES AND TIMES

USERS SAY

Austrian-born philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein wasn't born a light-hearted fellow, and nearly 20 years of giving unorthodox tutorials at Cambridge (between 1929 and 1947) did little to make him more carefree. For this exhibition of new and existing works by YBA alumnus Gavin Turk, however, the master of logic is positioned as a prankster, set to disrupt fellow countryman Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical propositions – all set in Freud's former Hampstead home.

The focal point of the show is Wittgenstein himself, in the shape of a life-size waxwork carrying an egg (look out for the slight smirk on the face of the man born into one of Europe's richest families at the time). Turk claims this is a reference to Wittgenstein's distrust of Freud's dream theory – the egg being one of the more symbolic natural forms that fit in the palm of the hand. The wax figure, reminiscent of something you might find leering from the side of a fairground ride, is stationed in Freud's



Gavin Turk: 'The Metamorphosis of Narcissus', © Gavin Turk

consultation office, which has been preserved as the thinker left it at the time of his death in 1939. The waxy philosopher brings welcome light relief to a room full of bourgeois trappings: heavy 'ethnic' rugs, tribal relics, and of course, the obligatory therapy couch.

Sitting somewhere between a Gerhard Richter painting and a maudlin florist's advert on the aesthetic spectrum, 'Wittgenstein Roses' hangs in the main hall. It's a strangely compelling photo of the flowers that are regularly placed in the Haus Wittgenstein museum in Vienna, positioned here next to the fresh flowers brought in by Freud Museum staff. This is another gentle poke – a playful reminder of how Wittgenstein, the stellar student of Bertrand Russell, was sceptical of what he saw as Freud's pseudoscience.

The Freudian terms 'Ego', 'Superego' and 'Id', all spelled out in typographically appropriate script, hang at various points along the staircase, and are less compelling for their lack of subtlety. However, the inclusion in another room of the self-explanatory installation 'Gavin Turk's Desk' (2002-2015) hits the right impish note. Turk's works here are a bit of a mixed bag, yet the interplay with their temporary surroundings is so effective that they add a fertile interventionist element to a museum that's already an interesting jaunt.

BY: ANANDA PELLERIN



Gavin Turk: 'That', © the artist, photo: Andy Keate