

The Artistic musings of Giles Summerhays

PORTRAITURE

The Beatles: Sgt Pepper



Janus is the Roman God of transition and change. It is usually shown with one face looking forwards and the other backwards.

I remember when Sgt Pepper was first released: it felt as though there had been a paradigm shift in the way popular music was made. My Janus heads of the Beatles have a Pre-and a Post-Pepper face on either side of the heads. It celebrates what I believe to be the best album ever made. The faces make an interesting study of physiognomic aging, reflecting their maturation and altered Psychology.

Lockdown Legends



During Covid Lockdown, I wanted to do a charity project, and decided to make life-sized heads of important and well known people, particularly those who played an important part in the crisis. My intention was to exhibit them and then auction them in order to raise money for hard hit artistic institutions.

In celebration of **World Craft town Farnham**, 30 of these heads were displayed at **The Maltings** and various sites around Farnham from 1st – 31st October 2022 as a trail. There was a competition for who can identify the most number of heads with a cash prize of £150 for the winner. 3 people shared the prize for getting all correct.

£500 was raised for Farnham maltings through the sale of one of the heads.

Sites around Farnham who participated in the trail include New Ashgate Gallery, Farnham Herald, Farnham Library, Farnham Museum, [University of the Creative Arts \(UCA\)](#), and Making Matters in the Lion & Lamb Yard.



Bishops of Winchester

These are a series of commissioned heads which are on permanent display at Farnham castle of the Bishops of Winchester. A type of medieval "Spitting image".

Memorial to Major John Prentice Wilkinson



My uncle Major John Prentice Wilkinson SOE, also known by his Nom de Guerre "*Freccia*" (The Arrow) was dropped by parachute into the Pre Alpi of northern Italy in 1944. His mission was to organise and align the disparate factions of the Partisans behind the allies. He was shot on 8th March 1945 by the German police. This was considered a war crime, and the Germans responsible sentenced to death, but subsequently commuted to several years imprisonment.

The partisans in northern Italy still remember Freccia every year in 3 separate ceremonies in August and September.

This bust was presented to the Italians and unveiled in 2013.

Grumpy Old Mugs: Cantankerous Tankards

"Nisi quod in se habet mordacis aliquid veritatis." *"Everything must have in it a sharp seasoning of truth"* St Jerome



A series of 9 mugs based on parodies of the great work of Leonardo da Vinci, and satirizes various mores of our society. The mugs are very large, and reference the enormous cups of coffee one buys in the coffee chains on the high street. It is the first of my visual metaphors for overindulgence.

The imagery is a parody of Leonardo's Last Supper which is a 15th century painting depicting Christ and his disciples, and the satire I employ is not intended as offence to Christ. His figure is the "voice of morality". In my story board,

Christ has returned in the “2nd coming” but he finds a changed world: “the disciples” have had 2000 years of evolution and adaptation, have gone astray, with views now representing a recalcitrant population, many of whom are bigoted, greedy, corrupt, venal, and in denial.

The Last supper is an iconic image, and I view the title in an apocalyptic sense particularly with reference to global warming and pollution. Furthermore, like many others, I am concerned with the effect of social media on our children, and am very grumpy over the use of phones at the table, which restricts conversation and family relations. In Obesity, the table acts as a vehicle for “under the table” subversive transactions distributing food. In some of the images, the Judas character is used for the particularly obscene insurrectionary opinion at which President Trump is so adept. The cartoon format allows for the depiction of those speaking through a hole in their backside.

There is irony when discussing 21st century issues with the context of a 15th century image of a 1st century scene.

- The Last Supper: Bankers (or any CEOs of FTSE companies for that matter)

“Every rich man is unjust or the heir of an unjust one.” St Jerome

This is a light hearted lampooning of the ridiculous bonuses “Bankers” feel entitled to that have no relation to their value, and are an insult to working people doing useful and productive jobs. CEOs of FTSE 100 companies recently voted (2018) themselves an annual average of a 16% pay increase, and they now earn **140x** the average salary of their workforces.



Why is this deemed acceptable to shareholders?

- The last Supper: Climate change deniers

“Ne hoc quidem scire quod nescias.” “It is worse still to be ignorant of your ignorance.” St Jerome

- The last Supper: Social media misuse,

Parents worried about their children's' digital habits: round-the-clock responding to texts, posting to social media, obsessively following the filtered exploits of peers; partly to blame for their children's struggles. Benoit Denizet-Lewis. “Why Are More American Teenagers Than Ever Suffering From Severe Anxiety?”, New York Times' Magazine, (Oct 11, 2017)

- The last Supper: Sexual Inequality,

In all sectors of society there should be roughly equal prospects of culture and achievement for everyone similarly motivated and endowed. The expectations of those with the same abilities and aspirations should not be affected by their sex or social class. John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (1971), p.73

- The last Supper: Overindulgence,

Gluttony is one of the seven deadly sins. Dante puts his gluttons in the third circle of the Inferno – writhing 24/7 in a whirlpool mud bath of live intestines and excrement. Does that seem an over-harsh judgment on a life spent ordering supersize cokes, buckets of fries and vats of gelato? Given the way we live now, the gluttony debate in Christian thought looks like a proto-Marxist prophecy against the overconsumption we have learned to call capitalism. Overconsumption that wrecks the planet and unbalances our relationships, nation to nation, class to class – and with one another. The greed-is-good philosophy of the Reagan/Thatcher era – 30 years of stuffing your face followed by economic collapse – is the macro model of what happens in our bodies. We are not designed for “all you can eat”... Food is fabulous. But too much eating of too much easy food too much of the time is partly responsible for our current level of degenerative disease – diabetes, heart conditions, fatty liver, hypertension, inflammation and, of

course, the rise and rise of obesity. Yes, this is about the sort of food we eat, but it is also about the quantity of food we eat. Many of us are gluttons. Jeanette Winterson in Why I fasted for 11 days, The Guardian, (11 July 2015)

- The last Supper: Gun control in USA,

To die is the lot of all, to commit homicide only of the weak man. St Jerome

- The last Supper: Sins of the Church.

"Since God has given us the papacy, let us enjoy it." Pope Leo X (Statement to his brother, Giuliano, as quoted in The Claims of Christianity (1894) by William Samuel Lilly, p.191)

Members of the church "in denial" over sins of the past. This mug was made prior to the Pope's tour of Ireland (august 2018) when he unreservedly apologized for the Church's sins of the past with regards to pedophilia.

Discombobulation

These pieces are made by a process of wheel construction followed by deconstruction and reconstruction. Nine pieces are made on the wheel, (thrown to reflect the inside shape) allowed to become leather hard before turning off the excess clay, and then reconstructed.

I like the word Discombobulation. It is onomatopoeic, and gives the description of motion and bobbing around on the horse. It also describes my psychological state, over the past few years where war, the Covid crisis, election malfeasance, Trump, Brexit, Twitter, Twits, Internet trolls and false news are in the ascendancy. Truth, competence, experience and rationality have been rejected, and lies, incompetence, inexperience and irrationality are in ascendancy. I refuse to use the word "fake" news as this is Trump's word for inconvenient news (or the truth.)

A rocking horse is a metaphor for childishness, instability, playfulness and lack of progress.

Discombobulation: The Very Stable Genius Trump and his shambolic administration has relegated the US from the most respected democracy in the world to the status of, perhaps not a "Banana republic" (as they do trade more than bananas) but at least to a "banana skin republic". He is the most divisive and venal President in the history of the USA.



The name comes from his self-description as a very stable genius: the irony of this will not be lost on many. The golden top-knot references his ridiculous hairdo, and the gold colour his obscene penchant for gold plated decoration (Trump lavatory) and the shape mimicking his absurd quiff. He has not one, not two, but 3 faces, referencing his ability to contradict himself in consecutive sentences, and wearing a trench coat often seen on mafia bosses. The piece satirizes this division with the use of an unstable pantomime rocking horse, dividing the horse in two halves, the front being the Trumpophobes, and the back the Trumpophiles. It is no coincidence that the latter represent the hind-end with scatological invective emanating from the trumpet bell backside.

Discombobulation: Three Bullshiteers is a lighthearted parody of the journalistic description of the three Brexiteers. In my satire, David Davis in front, ("thick as mince, and as lazy as a toad" according to the geographically challenged Dominic Cummings) Boris in the middle, and Gove clinging on at the rear. (June 2016)



I have been Eurosceptic over the last 40 years, but I voted remain, partly with respect to my "Remainer" children (who will be more affected by the decision), but also, I couldn't face the political disruption, media coverage and the economic hit that "Leaving" would entail.

This sculpture's origin was born from the day after the referendum when I detected a political vacuum, and a shell-shocked populace. Brexit politicians were running around like headless chickens denying any claims they may have made about money to the NHS, and generally showing, a complete lack of vision for the future. I imagine my Bullshiteers, having electioneered on a cocktail of misrepresentation, rejection of experience and expertise ("the country is fed up with experts") but having played an extremely successful "game" of politics, escaping the scene on their discombobulating rocking horse. Fear is reflected in the horse by a stream of liquid diarrhea, but accompanied by a lot of hot air emanating from the back end.



Discombobulation: It made a noise like this..... while appearing similar to the above has a completely different derivation. I remember going to the Royal Academy when I was about 12 with my mother, and seeing a painting of a number of tubes and pipes, ending in a trumpet like bell. The painting was called "It made a noise like this". I was incensed!! not only did the painting appear to my juvenile brain to be poorly executed, more importantly, it did not evoke any sound that I could recognize. ie loud, soft, low or high pitched, sonorous musical or cacophonous. I have always wanted to make a sculptural parody of this painting, using the trumpet device as the source of the noise.

In my story board for this piece, some children have been playing at marauding Vikings, escape onto their rocking horse (too many to fit, so the one at the back is hanging on like grim death). The effect on the poor old horse, (a herbivore which produces large volumes of gas in its gut) with 3 children leaping onto its back, would result in a dramatic increase in intra-abdominal pressure causing an explosive farting noise.

The Consumer



The overweight man's head is the globe, and he is eating a hamburger. The piece is not just about fast (fatty) food, but acts as a metaphor for consumption including raw materials and energy. The North America "mouth" reflects America's heavy use of energy and all things that go with it. It is fact that North Americans (from Canada and the USA) consume approximately 35% of the world's energy resources, but only represent about 5% percent of the world's population..

The Burghers of Catford



This was a college piece exploring duplication. It is primarily conceptual, with each figure produced from a press mould of a male and female figure. The texture was explored by altering the way the clay was pressed into the mould, to make each one unique though conforming to the same form. Join marks and the pour holes were enhanced to exaggerate the concept of mass production. The figures are placed in very close contact with one arm raised in the air, as a satire of underground tube transport. This form of transport would be illegal if transporting animals and the sculpture parodies the heroic "Burghers" who subject themselves to this humiliation on a daily basis, while drawing reference to the heroic figures in Rodin's "Burghers of Calais". The fact that the figures do not have clothes further exaggerates the disquiet of the close proximity.

While at first examination, I would expect the viewer to be confounded. Is it a mannequin factory? A new dance? A bizarre teleological argument or an internecine war? "Burghers of Catford" satirizes the mock heroic of commuters of that famous South London district, while referencing the great work by Rodin.