

Pig Shop: Simon Fennessy Corcoran



This week sees the opening of a new exhibition in the higher bridges art gallery, *Pig Shop*: a collection of new works by artist Simon Fennessy Concoran. *Pig Shop* invites conversation on the concept of value bestowed upon different raw materials in our economy, lifestyles and art.

A Limerick native, Corcoran reaches deep into the rich history of his home, to its origins as a central hub of the pig farming industry in the early 1900's. These works remind us of a time gone by, an almost forgotten way of life, and shows it to us through symbols of the pig farming industry juxtaposed with symbols of the world that has replaced it over time. Rich, gaudy metal and mineral displayed alongside and even fused with pig bone fragments. The project originated with Simon's own keen interest in both the concept of value and anatomy.

Whilst most of the display consists of original material a small number of borrowed pieces open the tour of works in order to set the scene. Historical documents- photography and newspaper clippings develop a great sense of the origins of the work and show us a window into a bygone Limerick.

The main works running along the gallery's perimeter show us a mixture of anatomical parts and precious materials, both individually and layered on one another, with crystallised pigs toes and gold layered pig skulls on display. The back wall houses a step-like series of miniature collections deconstructing the main themes, with tiny jars of gold leaf flake and the broken down bones of a full pig's trotter. The centrepiece demands attention, with its display of full pig skulls each layered in a different precious material. Ranging from chrome bronze leaf to gold resin and cobalt crystals the display is set to the backdrop of a huge and garish gold film curtain highlighting the modern obsession with gold.

Whilst the main attraction is most visually prominent, it is some of the less visually striking works that seem to hold more weight, like the half skull topped with a crystal mould encased in glass. Presenting the idea that it is somehow more valuable than the other works simply due to its enclosure, it raises questions about the relative value of our art as much as our economy.

Simon's work certainly brings 'meta' to the fore with multiple messages and themes hidden throughout; perfect for those wishing to really get their teeth into the meaning behind it all, like the bone fragments on a limestone slab, one of Limerick's foundations atop another. That said, it may not be for the

faint of heart.

There is a surprising sense of beauty in the work considering the combination of gaudy and sometimes grotesque material, with some of the displays seeming like they've come straight from a macabre Michelin star restaurant. A display well worth checking out, *Pig Shop* will be in the Higher Bridges Art Gallery from June 3rd– July 2nd.

Caiman O'Shea