

## Foreign Bodies. Adam Zoltowski.

There is a silent drama in the space between the objects, the *foreign bodies* that is familiar yet out of time. The receding trail of this familiarity leads to the Age of Enlightenment of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century where the Romantics held sway. As legend has it, William Blake received his angelic visions on Peckham Rye while Byron surely demanded silent reverence at sunset on the Grand Tour, crumbling ruin silhouetted against the sky. Visionary recalcitrant or dilettante beau, the movement's motif at both polarities was silent fertile tension, a phenomenon that has come to define romance.

In bed together or over a candlelit dinner there's a desire to join in harmony but there remains a foreignness to each other, and this foreignness is the true location of romantic tension, the presence of which is almost tangible as if there is a third party.

In *Foreign Bodies* the third party is Anubis, guardian of the afterlife and god of embalming whose angular planes are on a sliding scale of corporeality between two-dimensional and three-dimensional. Figures in ancient hieroglyphs are flattened to present the singular visibility of one plane at one time. Giacometti meanwhile says that it is as if other views cease to exist, and only in memory is there the illusion of volume. Two-dimensionality is more real. So by dint of being the least volumetric, this reasoning places the collaborative painting on the wall as an agent for the primacy or genesis of the show and is also perhaps fittingly the most lighthearted piece in the room.

Just as the elevation of walls surmount floors (and objects thereon), so heads preside over bodies. The heads on crates; *Portrait of Monika* and *Blackbeard* present a heaviness that returns us to the Grand Tour whereby removing an ancient marble as memento of ones travels was commonplace and led to forming the great collections. Consider that fragments – an arm or a belly – were often all that remained of the statue, discovery of the head would be cause for excitement as a superior trophy. Conversely, if a complete marble was made available to the selfsame tourist but the volume of cargo he could transport on the ship was limited he might order the head deliberately hacked off.

This has a bearing on *Foreign Bodies* in that the crates - likewise born out of the necessity of safely transporting the head fragments (which like follies are of a whole that never was) - have revitalised conviction as both physical support and inclusion in an aggregate narrative.

What is on display out of its crate can just as easily be put away in its crate; buried under a mound, in a pyramid tomb or in a warehouse or garage. It's inviting to relate the head/crate with legacy. Museums tell us that the reason sarcophagi resemble the features of the dead person is so that the *Ba* or 'personality' recognizes itself and returns to reside there, to live after the body dies. So we could speculate that the heads are self-portrait masks with an express intent.

This hubris however, belies a crucial aspect of the Romantic gesture, that of an elastic, playful/melancholic disposition towards belief. Friedrich Schlegel, literary critic of the Romantic era wrote that poetry 'should forever be becoming, and never be perfected' and is characterized by an oscillation between 'enthusiasm and irony'. In *Foreign Bodies* irony certainly marks the work's handmade vulnerability, this despite the zealotry of each object and their likewise zealous relationship to each other.

Joseph Lichy