

David Garner

Assisted Readymades

based on a talk to CASW, February 2016

My artwork takes a critical view of social, political and cultural issues. The subjects of my work concern a broad range of historical and contemporary issues, from early work dealing with the demise of industry, particularly in Wales, to a more recent engagement with global concerns, such as the Arab Spring. Although my work evokes specific events - Auschwitz, Aberfan, the Iraq War and the rise of Islamophobia - they are not restricted by narrative intrusion into these events. The images created have a more universal outlook so that a work dealing with the drowning of the Welsh community of Tryweryn can also be applied to the Ilisu Dam in Turkey. In this sense, what is included in my work is also as important as what is omitted.



A is for Aberfan
1999

School chairs, bitumen, coal, child's blackboard

The choice and selection of objects and materials is crucial to my methodology. I make prominent use of used objects and materials taken from the real world, which are burdened with associations. The origami tanks in *846* are made from leaflets distributed in Tahrir Square; the wooden elements of the *AK47* in *Olive Branch* are sourced from olive trees from Bethlehem. I believe this authenticity of materials gives the work greater resonance and authority.

Used objects are also important in inferring the human presence that is vital to the subjects of my work. The people represented have lost their lives, their homes, their country, their language; they may have been robbed of their dignity, their freedom, their voice. I believe the objects used become more powerful because they are heavy with this human presence.



Political Games 2
1995
Steel, wood, boots

Although the subject matters that I engage with may be unrelenting, there is a conscious lighter element suggested in the titles, which are often punning and poetic. A pallet made from hardwoods transporting an exotic bird's feather is labelled

Endangered Pallet; the bell jar of charred butterflies and poppy heads and stems becomes *And Burnt Butterflies Veiled the Land*. I believe that these elements are important to contrast with the often serious or ugly subjects.



Endangered Pallet
2011
Pallet made from hardwoods; feather from tropical bird



Sheep in Sheep's Clothing
2010
Taxidermied sheep wearing coat from its own fleece

Each project consists of multiple works centred on core themes. My research and production generates new areas of interest that progress naturally from previous works. Subsequent work is also influenced by contemporary social concerns and the global political climate.



Poppycock
2007

British army helmet with desert camouflage; dried poppies

Background note

David Garner lives in Argoed, south Wales.

His website - http://www.davidgarnerartist.com/David_Garner/Home.html - includes essays by Ivor Davies and Hugh Adams.

© the artist