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Feature

In the Age of Innocents - D. Dominick Lombardi



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Tony Moore, In the Age of Innocents, 2007. 60 body cast human heads, steel, porcelain, wood fired four days, 29" x 80" x 32"

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China Arts Magazine

The title of this exhibition, "In the Age of Innocents," brings to mind The Age of Innocence, a novel by Edith Wharton who writes about society, class and culture. However, I suspect Tony Moore is not making a reference, with his spelling of the word "innocents," to the rules of this society. No. Instead, Moore addresses the state of the world today, and how so many moral codes are being broken and yet so many innocents are still dying. You only need look at a television news broadcast for a moment, skim a newspaper or tune into a talk radio station to be reminded how many victims of unnecessary violence there are.

But Moore addresses this fact with great care and sympathy for the victim—that missing body and soul that can leave its mark so deeply upon us. In a very succinct way, Moore works with large, rather minimal slabs of various clay types to create works like He, Castle Cross, Shrine and Regarding Others. Here, we see imprints, sometimes quite deep, of hands and feet that bring to mind the presence of something that once was—a thoughtful and proud individual who stood up to his or her fate and left with his or her dignity and morals.

I found He, with its deepest footprints, to be the most spiritual and meditative. Some philosopher or thinker stood here, someone who orated and preached, doing what he could for others with the time he had.

There are other works that also suggest a reverence for the lost. The Gathering, for instance, which is shaped like a tombstone, should easily remind us of a grave marker. But, here, we are more mesmerized by the work's details: the imprints of the geranium leaves and the carefully-shaped areas where the artist applies gravel, giving this work the appearance that it was once attached to something else—maybe it was once a cornerstone or supportive post? Or, maybe it was simply an insignificant object that, through time and erosion, became something unique and beautiful.

The centerpiece of the show is In the Age of Innocents. A pivotal work of our age of unreason featuring numerous cast heads of the artist himself, contained in a rusted metal cage. Since they are white heads of discoloration and varied textures, I assumed Moore was working with colored glazes. However, the gallery's director, Janet Kurnatowski, told me that the modulations in the white porcelain are quite natural, appearing during the four consecutive days of wood firing that the artist employs. The variations depend on exactly where they are placed inside Moore's kiln.

But, that is more for the ceramic artist looking for some new technique to appropriate. What is important to the ceramic outsider is that Moore's piece speaks about the multitudes, the masses, the variations and intricacies of human life, and also about the precariousness of it all.

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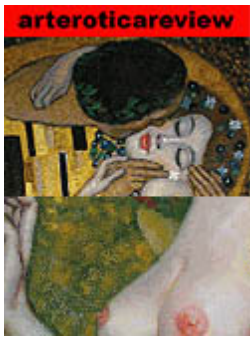


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