

Venice Biennale

Laura Ford

My work is a mixture of humour, melancholy and darkness. These characteristics are built up in layers of material, found objects and cultural reference applied around a core object, usually a figure. The accretion of these layers is not necessarily responsible in its process. Different trains of thought collide. I am playful when I work; I improvise sculptural acts, working them and re-working them until my understanding of the piece develops.

I am fascinated by who we think we are; the bizarre patchwork of oddities that form national identities. In this body of work I began by remembering and misremembering the emblems of some of the national stereotypes I grew up with; the Russian spy, the terrorist, the redneck, the image of the outsider, the foreigner, the witch.

As I worked through this hotch-potch of moustaches, jock straps, upper lips and berets I found myself assailed by darker thoughts of hostages and prisoners in postures of humiliation and defeat. I became intrigued to see that the trappings that conferred identity and the strength derived from being seen to belong were just those opened the way to objectification and onwards to extremes of cruelty.

Of the six sculptures that make up 'Glory Glory', five are dressed in forms of nationalistic costume composed in the same shorthand as the scrappy dabs of felt or card that signify so emphatically in the world of costume dolls. They present a confident, absurd and unmovable crew. The sixth work, 'Beast', is an emasculated lion figure.

My hope is that the work engages primarily emotionally and that the images are striking enough to stay with the viewer so that their understanding of the works continues to develop over time.

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