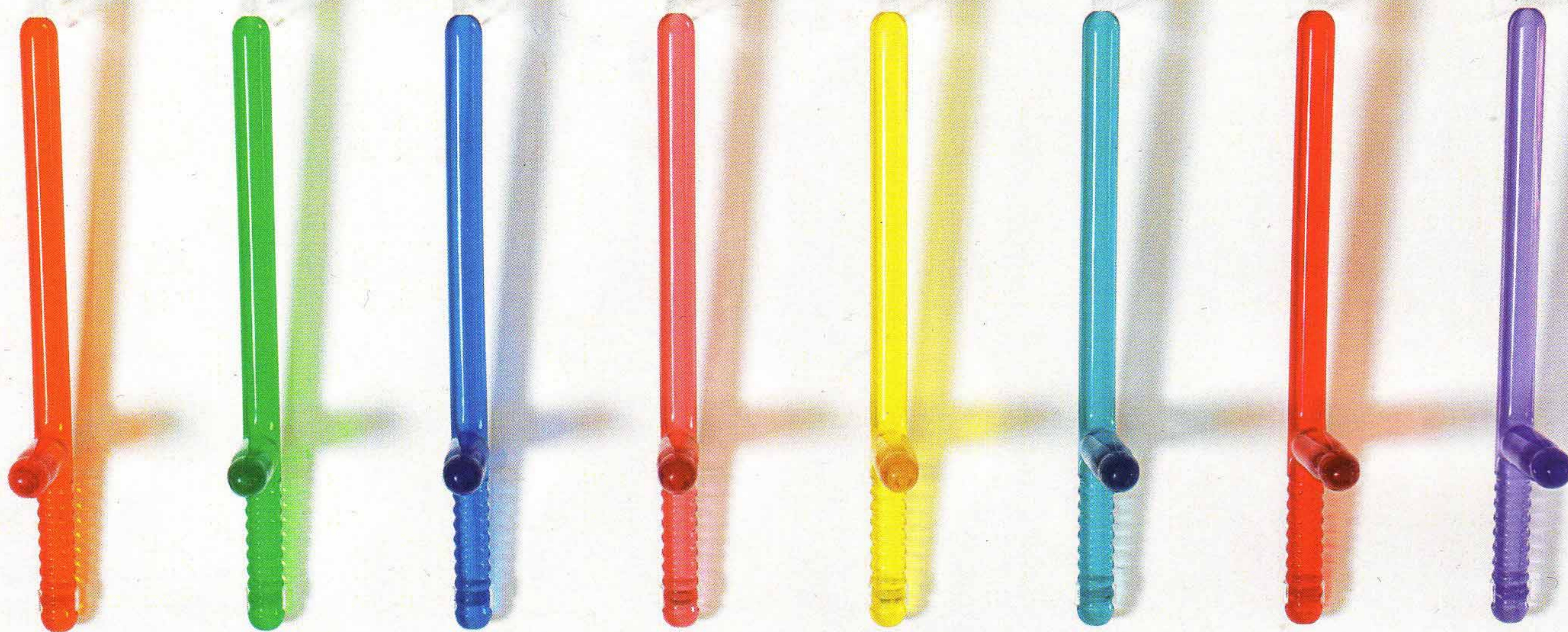


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*all articles by Thomas Nicholas unless otherwise noted
visit The New Heroes online at www.thepearlykings.com*

*Above : Hard Facts
by Mauro Perucchetti*



MAURO PERUCCHETTI

Mauro Perucchetti's voice as an artist is remarkably self-assured. His mastery of craft is nearly unrivaled in an art world dominated by political works striving to achieve a point through confrontation. Unlike a cultural shock artist like Damian Hirst, Mauro's approach is almost subversive in its intention: he woos you with the beauty of his pieces, crafted predominantly out of a polyurethane resin the artist fabricates himself, and then presents a scathing critique of our society. His imagery is overt – a deliciously appealing AK-47 formed from candy apple resin – a purple heart shaped grenade – an androgynous youth made completely of Swarovski crystals, calmly exhibiting his raised middle finger. Mauro's aesthetic harkens back to the streamlined Arte Povera movement that grew as a hybrid of pop and political art in 1960's Italy, but it is much more than that. It is a re imagination of traditional pop art sensibilities, and it is modern, truly of this century, a mirror of the material desires and so called needs of our society today.

There were several things that I assumed about Mauro based on his body of work. I pictured him as a young man – maybe thirty years old, on the verge of shaking the London art world into a new era. His work suggested to me an artist born with an innate voice in him, a clear vision that has guided a practiced hand throughout his career. I also sensed in him a nihilistic view on our direction as a culture – a little bit of rebellion mixed with enough knowledge of a world not governed by rules of morality.

I was absolutely wrong about every one of these things. Mauro Perucchetti is sixty years old. It took a brush with death for him to embrace his true calling in life and he is overwhelmingly non judgmental in his outlook for our society. More

than being influenced by the Arte Povera movement Mauro was immersed deeply in the social turmoil that ravaged his native country of Italy. His life has been a miraculous journey that he channels directly and with an altogether Italian passion into his work. I had planned a fairly orthodox interview with Mauro. After speaking with him and hearing his story I realize that any imposed format would simply serve to obscure the remarkable life that he has led. What follows is his journey told in his own words.



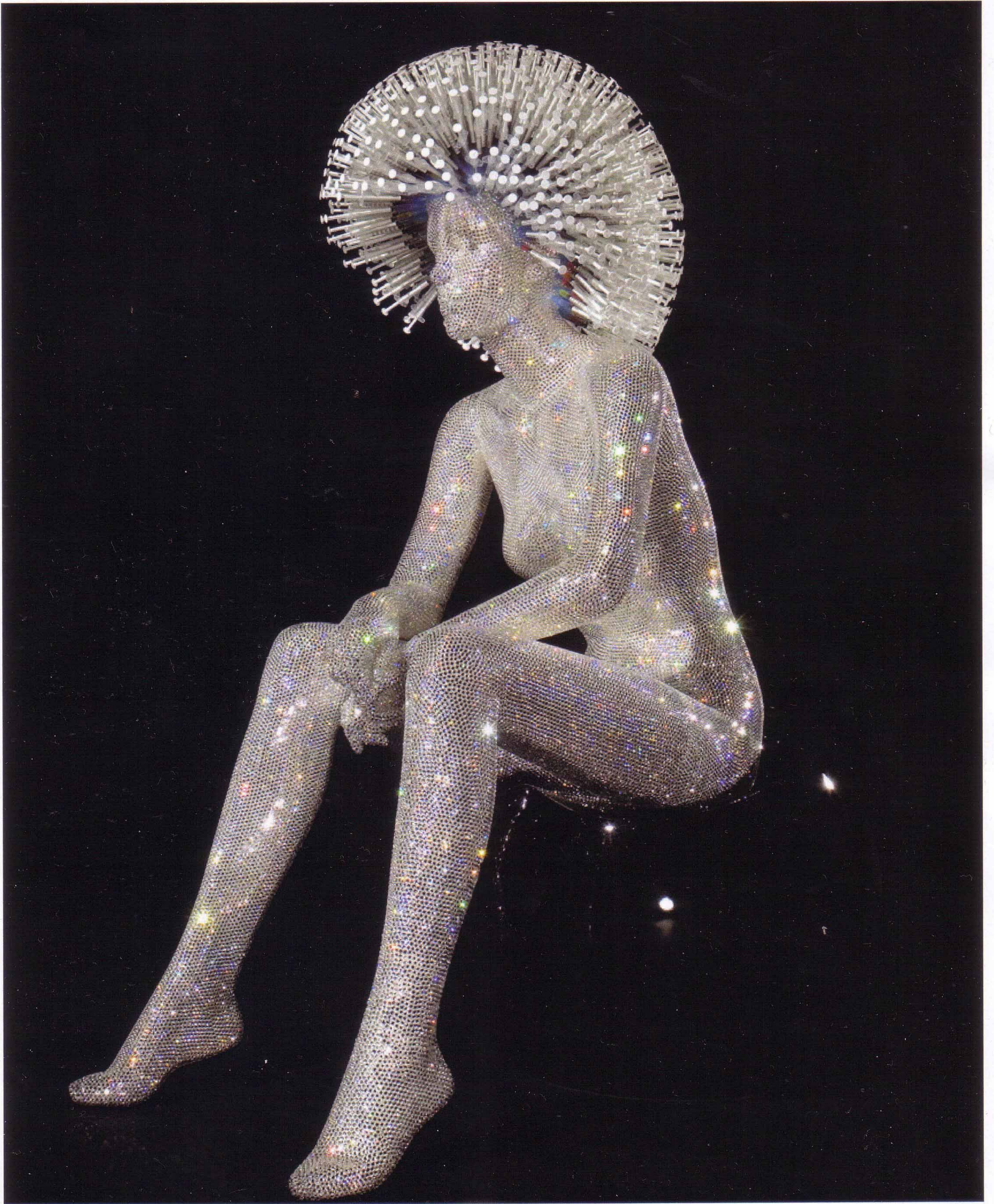
From an early age I was probably spending more time drawing, painting and making things with my hands than studying. Of those subjects I did study, I loved history, art and geography, all of which supported my imagination and an unstoppable tendency to dream.

For my parent's sake, I tried to decide what I was going to do in life, I was overwhelmed by all the possibilities. This, I think, is the first unfortunate sign of a creative mind. Claustrophobia was an overwhelming sensation until I was seventeen and decided to leave home and my loving parents. I grew up in a confined space in Milan that we shared with my grandparents; my grandfather, God bless him, was very dictatorial and things could become strained. By the time I was nineteen I had already been married for three months to the wrong woman (and vice versa), we'd had a child and got divorced. I was wearing a suit to work every day and life was grim.

During this period I had a near fatal car crash. I suffered terrible injuries and I never stopped being grateful for being alive. It was during this recovery period that I had time to reflect on how unhappy I was about the way I was living my life and decided to drop everything to go more "unconventional". This is when I really started having the experiences that would eventually have such a bearing my work. It wasn't long before I became an actor and I was cast as the driver in a movie called "The Driver's Seat" starring Elizabeth Taylor and Andy Warhol, who had a part as an enigmatic English Lord. Life in Rome at that time, late sixties early seventies, was surreal; a lot of decadence. It was here, living with my girlfriend who was quite well known, that I had my first taste of human rights movements and the great privilege to meet and, at times, hang out with figures such as Mohammed Ali and Wilt Chamberlain, along with a string of musicians and actors, all of whom would be in touch with my girlfriend when they came to Italy.

During this period I remember a lot of political unrest. It was as if the world was divided into extreme right and extreme left, with not much in the mid-

*opposite: Luxury Therapy
this page : Purple Heart*



dle except for violence and hippies. Eventually I realized that being an actor wasn't quite being in charge and I started a production company with a couple of friends. One was a bright young politician, whilst the other was an experienced producer. As things turned out, the former was killed and the latter ended up in prison. Things really started to deteriorate when the then Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, was kidnapped, like a lot of people, and killed. I had had enough and moved to London, with my new wife.

London was a great place in the seventies, and I was impressed with the Brits. The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Elton John, Rod Stewart, David Bowie, pink E types, the best motorcycles and the milk man, really cool. From here, all my attempts to become an artist were hampered by the need to make a living. It was my artistic ability, though, that saved me. I did everything I could lay my hands on, working for friends to begin with: I painted, decorated, restored antiques, worked with wood and metal, designed and built houses, designed a motorcycle and a car which, by invitation, was exhibited at the London Motor show in their "one off cars" stand. Eventually I ended up with a team of highly skilled craftsmen, most of whom I trained myself, and we started to work worldwide along side noted architects.

For the next 30 years or so I lived as freely as possible, whilst allowing for to need to make a living, until, at the age of 50 (ten years ago), I woke up one morning and decided that no amount of money or worldly comforts should keep me from being creative on my own account rather than just on behalf of other people. I sold my business and my house to finance my move into art.



“Creativity has an odd relationship with frustration that, I suppose, is why people talk about suffering for their art.”



I started to use resin initially because it was the perfect medium with which to make the Jelly Babies that I made for my body of work on cloning. Around 2000-2001 there was a lot of news about new developments in the ability to clone, I became very interested about the dilemma this presented us; between cloning, religious beliefs and medical ethics. I chose the pop image of the Jelly Baby to represent cloned humans.

One could say that STYLE is the way different individuals perform the same task in different ways. Resin is the medium I use most often; you could say it is my style of the moment.

When I started, there was nobody out there that I could use to help me. Every time I sought help from specialists I was told that I was already pushing up against the limits of what the material could be expected to do, so I was rather left to go it alone. It took me some time and a lot of dedication, but I can confidently say that I have pioneered the use of this material. I love its translucence and light reflective qualities; the effects are both happy and moody at the same time. I also love the medium I use because this particular resin is unexploited and therefore has the immediate benefit of making my work instantly recognizable. Finally, my medium is technically very challenging; infuriatingly so sometimes, but in an odd way this spurs me on. Creativity has an odd relationship with frustration that, I suppose, is why people talk about suffering for their art.

Most of the time it goes like this: I make an original sculpture using clay or high density foam then I

opposite page: Precious One

top: Bust
bottom : Oligarsaurus





take a mould and cast a fiberglass or plastic master which I finish to a very high standard. Next I take a proper mould of the finished master, this is a particularly delicate process. The materials used, along with the construction methods, are my "trade secrets". I am now able to cast the resin into the mould under a strict methodology, but one that can adapt depending on the piece; the chef's hand is very important here. After a period of curing in a controlled environment what comes out is not the beautifully finished item you see in the gallery. Now the piece undergoes a treatment very similar to that used in making a marble sculpture: we chisel, we scrape, we rub through many different grades of abrasives and then we polish. Unfortunately the costs involved are astonishing.

I find it fascinating how politicians, who are supposedly appointed to manage the interests of people, get there through intrigue and hypocrisy. Sometimes they go on to do an admirable job, but often they don't.

The rhythm of politics is perennial and can be reduced to the banal observation that a good politician is a popular one.

"The rhythm of politics is perennial and can be reduced to the banal observation that a good politician is a popular one. We should all try a bit harder with each other."

We should all try a bit harder with each other. With the rise of the media and technology, Politics is becoming very intrusive in our everyday lives.

I think young people should keep their eyes open and constantly extend their understanding of how others see things. If you hone this understanding it can be a formidable best tool. When you have good morals you really can push the boundaries; people are much more tolerant of your eccentricities and feel less threatened by your views.

I hope to have a long life in good health; I feel very fortunate that I'm doing what I am, and I have so much more I want to do than I physically have time for.

top: AK-47
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