

## Golden Rough

In "Golden Rough" the viewer is lured into an inky recess whose primordial darkness is shot through with shimmering lights emanating from a carefully placed array of talismans. In this womb like inner sanctum, these objects are comforting and protective agents in an otherwise dangerous world. Like any good talisman their presence is also slightly disturbing. In one of the many compounding ironies of this exhibition, it is gold itself that creates fear, danger and desire. Blackness and Goldness are a clever reference to Freud's not so happy bedfellows eros and thanatos.

The Golden Rough is an edible sweet that has been part of the Australian fast food culinary landscape for decades. In this exhibition Davey is like an alchemist, investing this ubiquitous 60-cent chocolate with a quasi-mystical significance. In reality however, this sweet is a large round tablet of chocolate and coconut. Its fat richness strangely appealing to all members of the community.

There is also a colloquial edge to the title "Golden Rough". That colloquial edge is also strangely appealing, perhaps even a little dangerous. Amongst the margins of society the term connotes a glorious eroticised fantasy. This is the fantasy of the straight boy, sometimes a surfer who "comes across". Only this time, he emerges sylph like from the waves of the sea of masculinity, a golden shekel glowing in the distance. The phrase is a variant on another colloquialism "rough trade", and in the light of the Australian dollar, which is still in free fall, another ironic reference to gold and its function in the world.

Now might be a time to consider the question what is valuable in these early days of the new millennium? The aura of gold emanates across all epochs. Prized for its beauty and valued for its rarity. A metal that is said to have its own light, this material can engender desire. From treasure to treasury and through to the contemporary museum, gold is about money and power. Gold is the conceptual glue or base that creates and motivates the mediums of economic exchange. Before the Gulf War of 1991 gold was valued at US \$400 per ounce. Apparently governments hold a third of all the world's gold in reserves for that rainy day. The only real challenge to gold's enduring cultural value is oil. The haunting blackness of the exhibition space not only references oil, gold's economic other, but also the common gold extraction method of cyanide leaching. Here is eros and thanatos again, desire and destruction made manifest in recent environmental disasters in Romania, Guyana and Papua New Guinea brought about solely through the agent of gold mining.

Talismanic objects, like gold, oscillate across times and epochs.

Two capital letter M's - "Golden Rough #4 (MM)" - are not only an echo of ancient Rome and an invocation to the new millennium but also speak of the timelessness of gold and the fascination that it still holds.

The row of gilded masks signals a kitsch return to a Kubrickesque fantasy of mid life crises. In "Fools Gold" there is the hint of Star Trek and Star Wars as well as a hint of the

fears engendered by contemporary scientific experimentation such as cloning and genetic engineering. The sheer number of masks refers to the continuing dominance of mass production in the world. However, these "identical" masks show slight signs of individuation, slight signs of difference. The sheen of the masks presents a distorting mirror that speaks of the innate narcissistic onanism of the mirror and the mask.

The medieval period has been a nostalgic locus of inspiration for artists and writers since the nineteenth century. In the middle of the gallery sits a velvet lined vitrine that contains the precious remains of the sites of creativity, the brain, (in particular the right hemisphere) and the hand. Davey has had these remains gilded in 24 carat gold to underline the value society places on the acts of creation. Also isolated in the glass container are 3 similarly gilded "Golden Roughs". These medallions have no distinguishing features, any visage or profile to create a unique commemorative or celebratory object. Entitled "Golden Rough 1 of 3", "Golden Rough 2 of 3", "Golden Rough 3 of 3" these objects speak of the notions of purity and standards that are attached to gold. These works shift across time from James Bond and "Gold Finger" to the shower of gold that came to Danae (see Titian et al).

"Golden Rough #2 (Going For Gold)" is an enticing work. A grid of partially scratched instant lottery tickets that potentially can deliver A\$2.8 million. This artwork is a great investment plus there is the added pleasure slogans made to inspire and spur one on to greater heights. The fortune cookie tells us "Success is Yours", "Enjoy Your Future" and "High Standards Win Respect".

"Fools Gold #2" is a neo conceptual homage to Manzoni and Fontana's 1950's alchemical explorations of space and materials. The 4 slashes that disrupt and puncture the surface of the picture plane/sculptural form are a gendered counterpoint to the ramifications of the colloquial edge of the title of the exhibition. The seemingly automatic hacking into the canvas refers also to the senseless and repetitive violence that accompanies gold. This metal is not always about innocence and purity. Gold corrupts.

"Golden Rough #3 (Ian)" features a grid of our golden boy Ian Thorpe. The subjects glowering gaze and posture is meant to signify a mean, rough and ready sportsman about to jump into the fray. However the position of the arms and hands lead the eye down the torso to the treasures, the crown jewels below. So once again Davey is drawing our attention to the weird series of conflations that gold can create.

In this exhibition the artist presents us with an ironic obsessive fantasy about gold. It is illusion. It is innocence and corruption. It is history. This fantasy coagulates into fetish.

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