

Critics Review – Class visit to the James Wallace Collection in the Pah homestead Auckland

The Wallace Arts Trust is located in the Monte Cecilia building in Hillsborough, Auckland. There were various themes to the exhibition, but the work that I was interested in were by Peter Madden, Marcus Williams and Roberta Thornley. The common theme of these works was a clever fictional portrayal of everyday occurrences.

The art work 'The unbuilt Return of Interminateopolis' by Peter Madden, describes itself as an intricate detailed, black vaguely rectangular structure, symbolising a doomed city. I saw it as a miniature world where death is applied through paper cut outs. The repetition of animals and skulls represents the different sides of life and death, side by side, intermingling. Peter Madden constructed this piece so that his viewers could feel a sense of foreboding and a lack of certainty. We feel as if something foreboding is lurking



around every carefully constructed miniature corner. His work, packed with every inch in detail conveys paper birds, mammals, insects and bones creating an image of unavoidable death. The silhouettes of sea creatures and mechanics symbolise emptiness. It has the usual sculpturally collaged Madden layering.

The meaning behind this art work is solely death and every aspect of it – whether good or bad. The cut-outs display dead/decaying images which may mean that life is fleeting and transient.

The photograph 'The Sleeper' 2007 by Marcus Williams captures a little girl and lamb, both asleep on a chair. The foreground is black with no trace of shadows or depth. The girl's head is wrapped in some sort of bandage or cloth which hides her identity from the viewer. The sleeping lamb seems to be protecting or is protected by the little girl whereas the girl's head being wrapped up looks forced or unprovoked. The girl and lamb do have similarities – both are young and sleeping. The contrast between them however – is that the little girl can't see or probably hear anything, but the lamb could awake at any time and act as her eyes and ears. As a viewer it is noticeable how neither the girl or the lamb are engaging with anything other than each other and because of this they become one. William's art works are fundamentally concerned with the problems associated with human communication.



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