

THE HUFFINGTON POST

How To Turn Thrift Store Figurines Into Naughty Works Of Art

English artist and ceramics restorer Amy Douglas is keeping folk art fresh.



We Don't Talk Much, But He Is Hung Like A Horse



The Un-Speakable In Full Pursuit of the Uneatable

At first glance, the diminutive ceramic figures of English artist Amy Douglas look like something you might spot at an antique store and pick up to surprise Grandma. The refurbished Staffordshire figurines, part of a longstanding tradition in English folk art, sure do look good on a mantle.

But keep on looking and certain details come to light. For example, the oh-so-respectable looking king in the white ensemble and triumphant pose -- he's holding a golden dildo. Ah, and a giant penis is emerging from the ground beneath him in the direction of his crotch. Yes, his name is King Dick.

Douglas is no traditional folk artist. She's in the business of ceramic intervention, finding broken figurines at thrift stores and junk shops and rendering them contemporary, absurd, hilarious and sometimes deranged.

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King Dick



Whose Riding Who? (Whose Taking Who For a Ride)

After studying decorative arts, training in matching and replicating colors and surfaces, Douglas worked in ceramic restoration. She developed the tools to play around with the traditional form, transforming broken flea market finds into contemporary art objects. Through her work, Douglas hopes to deceive “the modern viewer into believing what they are seeing is a work of the past.”

Staffordshire figures were, back in the day, toys of the common man, sold at fairgrounds depicting curiosities and celebrities and placed proudly on a domestic mantelpiece forevermore. “I have always been interested in the Staffordshire flatbacks as they are very much part of our English folk art,” Douglas wrote in an email. “Unfortunately, as many were often displayed on mantelpieces, when dusted, many have broken. These broken pieces I find in Junk shops and carboots, pretty much ready for the tip.”

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Working with conservation-grade materials, Douglas transforms a fair maiden into a pig-human hybrid who found an online dating profile she liked.

“How they are broken dictates what I do to them,” Douglas added. The content and condition of the statuette leads the way. Some are missing heads or limbs or both. “I either stick with their original story and twist it or make a new history for the piece.”

For inspiration, Douglas turns to the resounding weirdness of contemporary, everyday life. “I am nosy and listen to what people say on the bus,” she told The Creators Project. And thus, brilliant titles like “We Don’t Talk Much But He Is Hung Like A Horse” are born.



Nose Job 1

Douglas hopes her motley crew of dogs with absurd nose jobs and princesses with lobster claws will make you pause, and make you laugh. “In our modern fleeting times, attention spans are short,” Douglas said, “and this means we have a generation of people not looking very carefully at what is in front of them. Humor I believe is a great tool for unification, we love to laugh and I like to make people smile.”

Douglas’ statues are on view in “The Art of Salmagundi” at Jack Hanley Gallery until February 7, 2016. All images courtesy of the gallery and artist.

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