

Slinkachu



: Your work illuminates the effects that small-scale or miniature works can have on the spectator. Why did you decide to make these works small? How did you decide on the particular scale reductions that you use?

S: Placing small figures in urban environments allows me to explore the different ways in which a city can affect its inhabitants. This could be instilling a sense of loneliness, of annoyance, of anonymity, of danger or the feeling of being lost (for real or metaphorically). My work is both installation and photography. As the figures are so small, they can easily be hidden around the streets and so their size creates a sense of mystery and surprise if they are ever found by passers by. I like to think that perhaps in a small way I can encourage city-dwellers to start to pay a bit more attention to their environments. The photography works in a slightly different way. The fragility of these tiny figures amongst a sea of concrete seems to create an emotional response from the viewer, and this is something that I have become increasingly interested in as my work has evolved.

The models that I use are train set figures that I customize. They are usually 1:87 scale. I couple these with everyday objects that I find, such as pieces of litter or insects. I also scour model shops and online auctions for miniature props to use in my works.



: Do the small people and their worlds cause you to think differently about your self, about others, or about other worlds? What happens to you when you are making these works at these small scales?

S: I spend a lot of time thinking of scenarios for the miniature people that I use. I try to leave my work open to interpretation, in the sense that I want the viewer to create in their own heads the back-stories of the characters and their predicaments. That said, I always have my own idea of who each character is and what might be happening to them. I think that working like this trains me to put myself in the shoes of others to a certain extent. It reminds me a lot of playing with toys when I was younger and creating stories with different characters.



: Some of your works are funny and safe, others are dangerous and difficult. How do you decide on the topics or themes of your work?

S: Hopefully my works have different layers; on the surface they can be comical, or perhaps even simplistic in the way that they bring to mind other miniature fantasy worlds from works such as *The Borrowers* or *Gulliver's Travels*. Under the surface, there are

often different themes at work. I try to reflect the different experiences of city life, but using the miniature world as analogy. A man shooting a bee is perhaps protecting his property from a violent intruder. A young couple's first home is a drain pipe perhaps because there is no other



affordable housing. A discarded cigarette carton becomes a hide-away for bored kids perhaps because the council bulldozed the skate park to make way for a Tesco Metro. I like to use different experiences of urban life as the backbone to the miniature dramas that I create.

In December 2007, *IRAC* intervened in experiences of the Theoretical Archaeology Group, held at The Kings Manor, University of York. One hundred-fifty replica Cycladic figurines (an iconic illicit artefact) were placed in the building and its grounds. *IRAC* wanted to see how professional archaeologists responded to unexpected found objects. In the days that followed, some figurines were moved, some destroyed, some stolen, some collected, and some disappeared completely. Few were recorded and documented.

The original Bronze Age Cycladic figurines were made of carved stone: the production method reductive. **IRAC** chose the form of the Cycladic figurine to use as a result of the illegal collections that are sometimes formed of them, and because of the decontextualised and un-provenanced manner in which they are usually acquired. To create many figurines, *IRAC* inverted and serialized the original prehistoric process of figurine creation through mass production. Crushed and fragmented Bath Stone was mixed with water and dental plaster to form an original and a stereotype. Once consolidated the objects were marked with an identity number (e.g., IRAC 128) and then put into circulation. In November 2008, a second intervention took place at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich. Here, *IRAC* placed replica figurines behind glass (and thus beyond the haptic senses) and into currently in-use display cases; later the figurines leaked out of the cases and into the public galleries. The intention was to make the museum audience familiar with the figurines by allowing visitors to handle objects which were usually trapped inside the vitrines. Audiences were able to touch the figurines, move them, break them, and even steal them. One of many interesting responses was the way in which some people subversively inserted the figurines into other art installations at the Sainsbury Centre. Most figurines were taken away by visitors.

Through these interventions, *IRAC* has questioned the means by which objects are identified as appropriate materials for archaeological investigation. Provocative was the observation that when people were presented with these replica figurines, the response was often destructive, mischievous, possessive, or playful. These figurines had the capacity for personal expression through action and placement, regardless of whether or not a person had created the original object or not (i.e., meaning extends beyond producer or production). New questions arise. Were prehistoric figurines limited to the intentions of their makers or did they illustrate other peoples' thoughts? Were prehistoric figurines subversive elements that worked outside of rigid belief systems? Was a person's engagement with a figure most often unintentional, *ad hoc*, and unexpected?



put, recognizing of course that intended and actual use are often not the name thing. ¶ On the other hand, there is a second meaning and it is this meaning which may prove to be the more significant for understanding the social realities of living in the Neolithic. This second meaning works at a deeper level and has nothing to do with the intention of the person who modelled, decorated, or fired a figurine.