

Steve West

Bayart Gallery Exhibition, 11th April – 9th May 2009

The exhibition at the Bayart Gallery in Cardiff consisted of four pieces:

1. **Ancestral Guardians and Other Useful Objects**, two stacks of plaster shelving containing a collection of hybrid objects made of plaster and glass.
2. **Instruments of Calculation**, a table supporting a number of sculptural and architectural forms.
3. **Troglodytes**, a series of wall mounted winged branches, and architectural models.
4. **Plague – Virus**, a pair of large wings in relief supported by backing boards containing scrambled explanatory text.

Apart from **Plague – Virus** which provided a key point to the show, the works were made up of a number of interrelated elements.

The selection of work was made in response to the gallery space with a view to using the space as an arena in which to play out a drama of relationships between the pieces and the individual elements within them. Early on in this process the decision was made to show only colourless pieces (white plaster, clear glass and the unpainted aluminium wall supports), which would become integrated into the white walled environment, the intention being to blur the edges between the work and the exhibition space and between the separate works. The viewer was invited to consider the correlation between elements with shared characteristics whether they be part of the same piece or contained within apparently autonomous groupings.

The work was informed by an investigation into museology, categorization and cataloguing. In the case of **Ancestral Guardians and Other Useful Objects** particular reference was made to the plaster room in the V&A, the Gaudi Museum workshops in the Sagrada Familia and Cabinets of Curiosities. The units which made up the contents of the shelves were produced from several initial ideas which were cross fertilised and developed organically. The resulting collection of objects, which resembled interrelated family trees, were then jumbled and rearranged in accordance with an alternative system of categorization.

Instruments of Calculation brought together a collection of maquettes selected from a larger group. It was originally intended (given the resources) to develop each maquette into a monumental piece. Once again an interest in selection, categorization and grouping dictated the final outcome. Though the system controlling decision making drew elements from a personal narrative, the placing of the objects was predominantly influenced by the large architectural astronomical instruments which comprise the eighteenth century Observatory at Jaipur and the symmetry and alignment observed in visits to a number of Egyptian Temples. The scale of these structures suggested the table on which the pieces were to be displayed, a device intended to bring the work up to eye level so that the viewer could enter the miniature landscape and imagine it on a large scale (see SW_Instruments of Calculation_CU).

The objects which comprised **Troglodytes** shared common imagery. Though originally designed to be seen as a group, for the purposes of the Cardiff exhibition they were spaced around the gallery in order to circumscribe the other pieces and draw attention to relationships within their sphere of influence.

Plague – Virus also addressed the issue of systems, which in this case, rather than being of help in finding, communicating and understanding information actually hindered access to it, perhaps owing to an error or 'virus' in the structure or because of the hermetic, esoteric intension inherent in the practice.