

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

Press Release

Nathan Coley

The Box

Fear of Death, Defeat and The Mysterious

6 September - 5 October 2013



Nathan Coley, *Fear of Death, Defeat and The Mysterious*, mixed media, 42 x 42 x 42 cm

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is delighted to present a new commission for The Box by British artist Nathan Coley. Coley's work is predominantly concerned with the way in which architectural structures manifest the values of social reality.

Sourced from a recycled tombstone, Coley has encased an intricately carved angel within a mirror-lined box alongside a quote by English philosopher Bertrand Russell. Combining his use of illuminated text and gravestones for the first time, Coley's intervention in The Box explores Russell's dictum that religion is based primarily on *fear*.

The quote 'Fear of Death, Fear of Defeat and Fear of The Mysterious' derives from a lecture delivered by Bertrand Russell to the National Secular Society entitled 'Why Am I Not a Christian?' on March 6, 1927. Whilst religion provides solace in times of hardship, Russell laments against the 'warped dogma' of religion by questioning its concept of morality and contends that the principal enemy of moral progress is that of divinity. Instead, Russell argues that our outlook on life should be guided by science and rationality in order for the human condition to advance.

Russell proclaims that: 'We want to stand upon our own feet and look fair and square at the world -- its good facts, its bad facts, its beauties, and its ugliness; see the world as it is and be not afraid of it. Conquer the world by intelligence and not merely by being slavishly subdued by the terror that comes from it.' By placing the angel in front of the mirror, Coley forces the statue to 'look the world frankly in the face' and acknowledge its own existence free from the constraints of religion and the unknown. In the same vein, looking at the work from a different point of view, the lettering of Russell's quote only becomes legible when viewed from within the reflection.

Significantly, the angel is severed at the neck by a crack which follows the curvature of the figure's neckline. By using a dismembered angel, which is typically regarded as a symbol of transcendence, Coley's work also serves to destabilise the spiritual foundations upon which religion is built.

Born in Glasgow in 1967, Nathan Coley was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2007. He has had many international solo exhibitions including Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh; Haunch of Venison, London; Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh; ACCA (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art), Melbourne; Centro Cultural de Belem, Lisbon and Westfälischer Kunstverein, Munster.

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