

tit-bits

An Exhibition of Drawings and Sculptures by Fiona Robertson

tit-bits... a pleasing bit of something, a morsel, this and that; a title borrowed from the infamous, though shortlived British magazine of the 1880s, which collated for its readers a selection of informative snippets, jokes, and stories. To the millions who read them each week, these tit-bits were a source of light entertainment. To the generation of modernist writers that reached adolescence during the magazine's peak, they were the epitome of low culture, a sure sign of the degradation of society at the hands of the masses....tit-bits...the rag that Joyce's Leopold Bloom paws over while squatting at his privy.

tit-bits... the stuff from which these drawings and sculptures are made: the detritus of everyday, half-forgotten conversations, misformed impressions, shards of clothing, and broken mobile phones. Here is the ugliness of every day; the farce of modern consumer culture. It is an ugliness that binds the work to the long lineage of the historical grotesque in art, a lineage that, as Mikhail Bakhtin once observed, possesses a critical dimension wherever it appears. In its ability to parody and debase, the grotesque can reverse hierarchical structures and thus subvert the value systems of the society from which it emerges – a process that Bakhtin saw at work wherever the grotesque was employed by popular culture and christened the carnivalesque.

tit-bits... amusing, perhaps absurd, glimpses at life. For all their apparent horror these figures are nonetheless funny, always retaining the ability to provoke laughter. This humour often flows from a preoccupation with the body's margins, an ongoing parody of its quotidian functions – particularly those of the 'lower stratum'. Mouths, noses, breasts, and stomachs are variously amplified, yet peel back this fictitious artifice, and a more fundamental truth is revealed. What remains are fragile, singular beings, their conceits, pretensions and indignities laid bare.

The text on the poster is by Jean Dubuffet and is taken from the exhibition catalogue for his 1947 Paris show at the Galerie René Drouin entitled: "Les gens sont bien plus beaux qu'ils croient. Vive leur vraie figure. Portraits." (People are much more beautiful than they think. Celebrate their true figure. Portraits.)



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