

Spring 1883

2 – 4 August 2018
Suite 230

Text by Samantha Littley

Jan Murphy Gallery's booth for Spring 1883 is curated around the theme of the 'hotel', and responds to The Hotel Windsor's unique history, architecture and décor, in anticipation of its imminent redevelopment.

The idea of the hotel looms large in our collective consciousness, whether through childhood memories of family road trips, romantic trysts enjoyed as adults, or references in popular culture — Alfred Hitchcock's spine-chilling thriller *Psycho* (1960) and the Eagle's classic ballad *Hotel California* (1976) to name just two. The work of the seven artists represented here is proof that the concept is ripe with possibilities.

Gerwyn Davies

Gerwyn Davies' hyper-real photographs see him assume the roles of designer, director and performer as he dons the fantastic costumes that he fashions from dollar-store tat, to assume characters that are generic and personal. In Suite 2018, a room at The Hotel Windsor becomes the backdrop for his turn as a gaudy corporate ornament, or alternately a glitzy hotel 'robe' replete with disposable slippers. Through such extravagant displays, Davies entices viewers into a realm that is irresistibly indulgent, while reminding them of its follies.

Leah Emery

Leah Emery lures us into the cosy world of cross-stitch only to confront us with the pornographic content of her work. Up close, her meticulous stitches blur like the pixelated digital originals on which they are based. From a distance, the threads coalesce to reveal unlikely assignations that provoke mixed responses, and are intended to generate dialogue. As Emery says, 'I think we could all have a much healthier... approach to topics of a sexual nature if we talked about it... more.'

Honor Freeman

Honor Freeman is all too familiar with the anonymous yet intimate spaces of hotels. In a past life, she worked as a cleaner in a budget motel, patiently restoring a veneer of cleanliness to rooms occupied and vacated by a train of strangers. A similar forbearance characterises her ceramic practice. With the precision of a surgeon, she reproduces in porcelain everyday objects such as soap and handtowels, instilling value in the remnants of others' lives, and enshrining the traces that they leave behind.

Claudia Greathead

Claudia Greathead uses her practice to navigate life, and provide her viewers with an escape from their own. Her paintings are often based on family photographs, or images that she sources from the Internet. For Spring 1883, she riffs on the lives of the rich-and-famous who have made The Hotel Windsor their home-away-from-home. The gym that Meryl Streep had installed in her suite is the subject of one painting, while Kylie Minogue appears in another that immortalises her stint on *The Vicar of Dibley*.

Linde Ivimey

Linde Ivimey stockpiles the detritus of her life, collecting chicken bones from family roasts and foil from bottles of champagne savoured with friends, and reanimating them. The gold discs that adorn her cushion are a case-in-point. The pillow's gossamer surface gives rest to a character crafted from the skeletons of small creatures and embellished with a Lemon Topaz, a stone believed to have healing powers. The reclining figure is a disconcerting yet strangely familiar talisman, whose pose evokes the decadence of luxury hotels.

Juz Kitson

Juz Kitson is something of a conjuror. The porcelain forms that she coaxes into being assume lifelike shape, and blur the line between the fictional and the real. Their glazed surfaces are suggestive of sexual organs, flower heads, and crustaceans, and often incorporate organic matter. Kitson's work for Spring 1883 takes two distinct directions: a 'family group' of faceless souls with porcelain 'pelts' act as sentinels of sleep, while an assortment of imaginary aquatic creatures cast a dreamlike sequence across a pristine counterpane.

Ben Quilty

Ben Quilty presents a shadier view of the hotel more akin to Hitchcock's, where the goings-on have a perceptibly sordid and, perhaps, sinister overtone. A Santa Claus figure, who Quilty invokes 'to scrutinise capitalist society and symbolise masculinity', surveys the bacchanalian scene: the end game in a world of greed and excess where privileged, white men triumph. With its crosshatched lines and sumptuous red-black ink, denoting wallpapered walls, the etching shares something of the complexity that characterises the artist's paintings.