The Private World of Viktor Tinkl

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The Robert McLaughlin and Mississauga Galleries are to be congratulated for prizing some of Viktor Tinkl's art into the public forum. Since 1965, the Tinkl's schoolhouse-home has become integral to his artistic endeavours. After years of extensive exhibition activity, and a secure position in the Canadian art establishment, he has left the public gallery world to continue his life-project, creating a permanent venue for his own work and also that of his partner Judith's quilted art.

From a myriad of extraordinary creations, curators Linda Jansma and Rob Freeman decided to concentrate on two central works, The Meeting and Circle, finding thematic connections in them to many areas of the artist's vast and prolific oeuvre. Additionally, they have included some earlier pieces and had Tinkl execute two site-specific wall drawings in the Oshawa gallery space. Indeed the exhibition possesses the illusion of continued expansion as it progresses, mirroring its source at the artist's much-celebrated Sunderland home.

Circle from 2006 displays a biker bar aesthetic, with its ring of grimacing fox head skins that are both horrific and hilarious. The mouths are pried open with cans sliced and twisted to form bared teeth. Heads jut forward, mounted on up-ended rectangular Thompson water sealer cans, their obligatory skull and crossbones icon reading like T-shirt logos. Also evoked is granny's fur coat, in its day the height of fashion, with its little heads that came together at the collar, most certainly wreaking nightmarish havoc in small children everywhere. These characters menace each other effectively, without diminishing the underlying chuckle of the artist.

In The Meeting, two rows of figures are face to face, grinning maniacally with the aid of denture moulds attached to a variety of heads made from books, olive oil cans, wooden blocks, and so on. Each individual suggests lively interaction with its weird colleagues, possessing a multiplicity of detail that compounds upon the whole. Close examination reveals quotidian fragments such as old linoleum, calendar pages, photographs, cutlery, examples of the endless detritus of living. It is as if an entire junkyard was miraculously animated into a semblance of order.

Seasons shows most wonderfully the artist's celebration of his marriage to Judith. Made in 2001 for their 35th anniversary, four wheels exhibit photographs from their life together, the four seasons depicted in natural imagery from their surroundings, and the seasons of life in evidence through suggestive images and objects portraying babies, fireworks, cakes and quilts. The Judith-component is surrounded by a collection of figures including the Pope, Death, various animals, and Viktor, who is sporting a spec-

Viktor TINKL, Kopfe Mother, 1978. 208 x 53 x 38 cm. Michael Cullen, Trent Photographies.
The exhibition title *Making Things* is based on Viktor's claim that he is a "thing-maker" rather than a sculptor. The word "thing" is somewhat problematic, given that the artist's subject matter defies the dominance of the object. The work is an exclamation of humanity, a celebration of the forces of life — sexuality, love, play, birth and death. The things are what he uses to express an exuberant and joyful life force.

Photographies.

Michael Cullen, Trent 132.5 x132.5 cm diam. 2006.

of three wooden busts made from objects. Kbpfe of only inventive but also transformational. Tinkl's use of found objects is not somewhat problematic, given that the artist's subject matter defies the dominance of the object. The work is an exclamation of humanity, a celebration of the forces of life — sexuality, love, play, birth and death. The things are what he uses to express an exuberant and joyful life force.

Fauve-coloured wood, scarified with tin can lids and jagged incisions. The properties of the lids are exploited — their distinctive ridges still identifiable but also forming surface patterning on their wooden ground. Accentuated by the nails that encircle each metal surface, they hug the wood with arcs and discs that suggest Cubist-derived composition. Connections can be made to the way Picasso also used his personal life as raw material, but Tinkl's vision feels decidedly more celebratory. There is a comfort level exist in the world that Tinkl has created from similar materials. Originally planned as utilitarian buttressing and an aqueduct system, it evolved in fanciful extrapolation into gargoyles, familial characters, and all manner of creature. While some cement appears in a few of the smaller works on display in the gallery, most of it is built into his property and unable to be moved. In compensation, the exhibition catalogue includes a photographed walkabout and artist interview. Beyond assemblage and Art Brut things is based on Viktor's claim that he is a "thing-maker" rather than a sculptor. The word "thing" is somewhat problematic, given that the artist's subject matter defies the dominance of the object. The work is an exclamation of humanity, a celebration of the forces of life — sexuality, love, play, birth and death. The things are what he uses to express an exuberant and joyful life force.