

YOU SHOULD NEVER LET THE TRUTH GET IN THE WAY OF A GOOD STORY

Steve Carr

A Pocket Full of Horses

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A Pocket Full of Horses sees a subtle shift both in Steve Carr's conceptual focus and formal emphasis. Perhaps his most successful strategy to date, the double bluff of adolescent irony, takes a back seat. Similarly, we see an easing of Carr as the centre of attention. No longer the star of the show, Carr is able to construct a lighter, and more sophisticated complex of themes. That's not to say that *A Pocket Full of Horses* isn't self-indulgent. It is. Carr, however, diverts that indulgence to more intimate moments, to isolated gestures of genuine warmth and beauty.

There's a lot of work in the show. Carr presents two complimentary suites of photographs, one a series of 'grandpas' wearing plastic teeth, and the other a documentary series of various toys in trees. A third suite of photographs depicts bare hands posed with googly eyes. Carr has made two film pieces, each shot on 35mm and displayed through old TV sets. Completing the ensemble are two sculptural works: one a pile of ten thousand metal casts of cigarette butts, chewing gum and peanut shells. The other, a forest of marshmallows on sticks, fabricated from Carr's 'signature' blown scientific glass, standing erect in a giant block of foam.

There is no real central or pivotal element to this body of work. Any element can be central, because they are weighted relatively evenly in terms of what they can contribute to the story.

Carr's formal logic is played out in what is, physically, the largest work in the show: *Marshmallows On Sticks*. The block of foam is a soft shade of pink – a dangerously literal association with marshmallows and bubble-gum adolescence that Carr is all too aware of. If he was going to choose a colour, pink would be the first colour he'd think of - and for the same reasons also the first colour he'd decide against. But Carr is prepared to be honest: that's just the way the foam comes. And, whether it's contrivance, cute resolution, or strategy, what's important is what ends up in front of you.

Carr recalls a thing that his uncle would sometimes do. Steve would be sitting in the lounge, and his uncle would bring him a cup of tea. He'd come in, put the tea down and leave. Everything would be perfectly normal, except that the uncle would be wearing a set of plastic Dracula teeth. Steve would try his hardest to not react to the peculiarity of the

event, so too would his uncle remain deadpan. His uncle would have gone back to the kitchen and thought it was hilarious, and it is. More so because Steve knew that his uncle would probably do it again tomorrow. Neither of them could laugh, or they'd spoil the joke. The magic is unspoken.

Steve's Dad puts toys in the trees of his garden. He doesn't approach this flippantly or naively. They are permanent and considered: the green crocodile's got a nail through its gut. His dad doesn't feel the need to explain it, just as Carr doesn't feel the need to understand it, even though he identifies in them quite sensitive sculptural concerns. They work, and Carr respects that by sensitively composing and documenting every one of them. The photographs will never be as intimate, nor communicate the intimacy of Steve's first discovery of 'Dad's Art', but that's not the point. The back-story to Carr's work - the personal joke - isn't necessary, but it's nice. Carr offers the work like the sharing of an anecdote; as a way of making conversation with an audience and opening up possibilities for people to value and share in the work, and value and share something of their own.

The joy that his dad gets from putting toys in the garden is a personal one. It is the same joy that can be isolated in the moment of pleasure that his uncle had when he got back to the kitchen. These anecdotes, no matter how much truth there is to them, reveal a real level of intimacy; a private moment between people. These moments are where Carr sees beauty, and just like everyone else, he loves a good story.