

ME WANT NOW by Barnaby Barford



Barnaby Barford's 'ME WANT NOW'

Barnaby Barford is unquestionably an artist that pushes the boundaries of conformism further and beyond. After the huge success of *The Tower of Babel* (2015) at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the artist presents an entirely new body of work titled *ME WANT NOW* at David Gill Gallery.

The thought-provoking installation approaches a metaphorical narrative on the way we behave towards the things we want. Have more, buy more, do better, move forward, grow and succeed. *ME WANT NOW* discusses the basis of our polarized political landscapes. Barford looks at the world around him and comes to realize that our modern society thrives on the feeling of individuality where one has to put himself first in order to become and achieve more while still creating a never-ending cycle, imprinted inside each and every person which subconsciously and organically leads humans towards self-preservation.

'More', 'Power', 'Change', 'Choice', 'Hope', 'Glory', 'Greatness' – These are the emotions that often drive us into making and achieving great things. These emotions are not negative at their core, in fact, the artist describes them as *"inherently positive"*, however, once they are repeated continually, their meaning become distorted, corrupted, and compromised. The purity in them is gone and their meaning is now egoistic and self-motivated. Barford says: *"it feels like words have never been so important – those written in the press, posted across social media and in speeches from our politicians, in volatile times words can be dangerous."*

As done many times before, Barnaby Barford wants to provoke his audience by leading them to question their relationship with the world surrounding them. As part of ME WANT NOW, the artist sees large scale drawings becoming part of the installation, adding a great deal of depth and value to his structure and work. These Word Drawings describe the chaos present in the concept of 'Me First'. This concept, seen through the artist's eyes, is not pretty or organized, and represents an invisible force that grabs us and soaks us into the idea that we should have more; we should be first, regardless of the consequences or repercussions along the way. It is a question that deeply involves the justification that *'the means justify the ends'* as long as we get what we WANT. Barford also sees this chaotic system as claustrophobic yet with a beauty and serenity that most do not appreciate.

The drawings are seen as 'envelopes' that wrap the series of life-sized animal sculptures and trophy heads, iconic from Barford's work and style. The sculptures are constructed from thousands of individual ceramic pieces that feature fragments of the Word Drawings. The heart of the installation is a series of life-sized ceramic sculptures of animals lining up patiently. These are seen as seemingly powerful and free creatures, yet, they are still. Waiting for something to happen. Prisoners of time and motion. They are powerless, standing and waiting for the unknown which the artist uses to create an allegory of human existence. We are free and have the power within us and yet, we have become slaves of WANT not even being able to overcome TIME.

Barford is known for creating a mirror to both physical and metaphorical, enabling his audience to look at themselves in a deeper way. He is not, nor has ever been, afraid of creating this depiction of human nature, presenting us with an uncomfortable yet necessary glimpse of ourselves and reflecting it through his work. When talking about ME WANT NOW and the thinking process behind it, Barford states; *"Individually the words I have chosen are positive as are the pieces in isolation, it is in their relationship to each other and ultimately the installation as a whole that drives the narrative of the exhibition. Fear promotes the 'me first' culture, the disregard of consequences and the collateral damage that ensues seems to be eroding our sense of collective humanity."*

He goes onto ask: *"In the face of our insatiable need for more, and the resulting constant sense of discontent, is this what we really want?"*

ME WANT NOW opens today at David Gill Gallery in London until December 21st 2016. Find out more [here](#).

Text: Hugo Fernandes
Images: Courtesy of Barnaby Barford

