

how to spend it

Animal magic at Barnaby Barford's *Me Want Now* solo show

The artist presents new sculptural work and drawings at David Gill Gallery



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London-based artist Barnaby Barford never shrinks from presenting work that compels viewers to reflect on their values and choices – and his solo exhibition (Friday November 18 to Thursday December 21) at David Gill Gallery of new sculptural work (prices on request) and large-scale drawings steps up his confrontational stance.

Me Want Now questions what Barford believes is a prevalent “me first” mentality – that as individuals we are seduced by an egocentric desire for goods and services that can be delivered immediately with no regard for the consequences; yet “more” and “faster” are not always “better”, he suggests.

A dozen energetic, large-scale “Word Drawings” in pencil or charcoal on paper or giclée print offer a contrast to Barford’s meticulous sculptural work. The chaotic repetition of barely visible words such as “hope”, “glory”, “choice” and “change” form claustrophobic patterns that suggest desires spiralling out of control. Fragments of these word drawings are repeated on the thousands of individual ceramic shards from which Barford has created the 11 life-size animal sculptures and four trophy heads that provide the show’s main focus.

From an 2.5m-tall polar bear and a baby elephant to a tiger, wolf and rabbit, these silent creatures line up, side by side, as if waiting for the fallout from human behaviour and environmental issues. In a separate area, the four ceramic trophy heads, mounted on mirrored plaques, reflect a glimpse of who might be responsible for their fate.

“The essence of the show runs through the whole of society,” says Barford. “Fear promotes the ‘me first’ culture, while the disregard for consequences and the collateral damage that ensues seems to be eroding our sense of collective humanity. Individually the words I have chosen are positive, as are the pieces in isolation; it is their relationship to each other and ultimately the installation as a whole that drives the narrative of the exhibition.”

David Gill Gallery, 2-4 King Street, London SW1 (020-3195 6600; www.davidgillgallery.com).

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