

Tom Duncan “Portrait of Tom with a Migraine Headache”

Andrew Edlin Gallery

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Andrew Edlin Gallery presents Portrait of Tom with a Migraine Headache, which features the monumental sculptural assemblage that artist Tom Duncan has been laboring upon off and on for a quarter of a century. The stunning display of his other magnum opus, Dedicated to Coney Island, at last year's Armory Show and currently on view at Paris' Halle Saint Pierre marks the simultaneous showing of his two most signature works.

The centerpiece and exhibition's namesake is a colorful, four-sided, multileveled, interactive sculpture that stands more than ten feet high. Duncan experienced his first migraine headache on the plane flight from Scotland to New York when he was eight years old. That episode and dozens of other scenes from his life growing up in Edinburgh and the Bronx are embedded in diminutive two- and three-dimensional tableaux that festoon and encrust the surface, and penetrate into the interior, of this spectacular work that is really nothing short of a massive psycho-biographical memoir.

The memory pieces that Duncan creates refer to real-life events from his early youth in Scotland during World War II, and later in New York City following his immigration in 1947. His work often appropriates toy figures and other found objects, but just as often he fabricates miniature sculpted and painted clay figures cast in plaster, then places them against a drawn and hand-colored or collaged backdrop. Mixing humor, religion, sexuality and politics, he ultimately defuses them through a layering of contradictory emotions that are both childlike and chillingly adult.

Another recent work, The Execution of Private Slovik, is a tower-like construction roughly the shape of an elaborate 19th century shrine. It utilizes an old steamer trunk into which has been placed a fluorescent-lit tableau scene of the final moment in the life of Eddie Slovik, who had been placed before a firing squad for desertion during the Battle of the Bulge.