

the *other* dollface

THE V&A MUSEUM OF CHILDHOOD IS HOST TO SOME OF THE BEST TOYS A KID HAS EVER SEEN, AND THEIR LATEST EXHIBITION OF THEM IS CERTAINLY NO DISAPPOINTMENT.

From the 3rd September 2010 to the 2nd January 2011, the museum will show Craig Deane's portraits of the extensive doll collection of the V&A. Editor-in-chief Helen Wigham caught up with Craig to hear all about it.

Craig Deane is a 33-year-old, photographer originally from Nottingham. He currently lives in Bethnal Green, East London with his long-term partner and their two children. He has resided in Paris, New York, Bern and Arles to name a few places, before settling down in his current London home.

What made you want to be a photographer?

I originally studied architecture and interned at a well-known architectural office in New York for a few months. I spent my days making models and drawings, and every other waking moment of my time there, taking photos with my first 'proper' SLR, the Pentax K1000. I was staying in a squat on the Lower East Side (when it was still real, before it became uber-desirable and chic) and was inspired to shoot every day. My interest shifted irrevocably during that time from architecture to photography and that was that.

What is your favourite thing to

photograph?

I enjoy taking photographs whatever the subject matter, so I have quite a varied body of work. What drew me to picking up a camera originally was the city: its edges, its detritus, how it is used by people and the bits left behind afterwards. I am also attracted by the things we have and use, hence my series of portraits of dolls faces I will be showing in September.

What inspires you?

What inspires me isn't grand themes, but the everyday - and in finding something enigmatic in the apparently banal and anodyne things around us. I try to do this in my day job as a commercial still life and portrait photographer, and more especially in my own personal work.

Why did you choose to photograph dolls?

I was photographing my baby daughter's favourite doll one day to test a new lens I had purchased and I was fascinated by the resulting images. I realised that I had never really prop-

erly looked at this object we had chosen to give to our child to play with and now I had a fixed, detailed, large-scale image of it. I was fascinated - the eyes of the doll were directed straight at the camera and were particularly striking. As a portrait and still life photographer, I am interested in both the representation of the human form and the objects we surround ourselves with. Mankind's desire to make images and objects in our own likeness stretches back to the dawn of civilisation and, while dolls have traditionally been toys for children, they are also coveted by adults for their beauty, nostalgic value, and historical and financial importance. This project serves not only as an exploration of this, but also functions as an investigation into the nature of portraiture in photography. I wanted to transform these ostensibly 'still-life' photographs of dolls into something closer to portraits, not only of the dolls themselves but also of the changing representations we as people, make of ourselves. Before this project (and certainly before I had children), I never had any particu- ➤



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Did you ever have any dolls as a child?

Although I have a big sister I don't recall ever playing with her dolls as a child. I had an enormous (to me at the time) Winnebago toy you could push along, take the top off and put your Lego men in. I called it the Jumbulance and it is a very treasured possession.

What do you wear to work?

I am in the very fortunate position of not having to wear a suit and tie to work every day. Within reason I can wear whatever I want, but sometimes I have to dress a bit more respectably for certain clients. Personally I like to combine some high and low fashion - a pair of Helmut Lang flat-fronted trousers worn with an old vintage t-shirt, for example. I am also a big fan of crappy trainers, I'm afraid. My favourites are riddled with holes but feel like a second skin. I have to wear a lot of

black as it cuts down on surface reflections when I am photographing glossy or reflective objects. Fortunately, I also happen to like black.

What do you do in your spare time?

I play football and read. Remember, I have two small kids - spare time is not in abundance in my house!

What is your motto?

Make mistakes; ask questions, do it anyway.

What things can you simply not live without?

If I didn't say 'my family' I would be in trouble, but it happens to be true.

How do you take your tea?

Tea - black, one sugar. No more coffee for me - I developed a significant addiction to it in New York and have managed to kick the black crack. You can't beat the smell of good coffee though.

Finally, when we say the word 'dollface' to you, what does it make you think of?

Naturally, now it makes me think of my upcoming exhibition at the V&A Museum of Childhood. I guess it also makes me think of those gangster movies from the 30's and 40's - all fedoras, flat noses, sharp suits and dolled-up molls.

So now we share our name with Craig Deane's fabulous exhibition but we really don't care, for it's quite an honour.

Check out the exhibition from 3rd September 2010 to 2nd January 2011. Admission is free. The Museum is open 10am - 5.45pm Monday to Sunday (last admission is 5.30pm)