Quinn

Watch this:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdRfD7Urd6Y>

And this one:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKam3s0tbnA>

This interview is an interesting insight on to the relationship between art and reality, the form of beauty and how some art works gain widespread attention and recognition. He discusses all three of our keyworks:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vq4HuuA2AMY>

Tracing traditions and the evolution of ideas and statements about contemporary cultures

**Self** compare with Roman death masks and Rembrandt’s self portraits (also Van Gogh’s)

**Siren** compare with Indian chola figures

**Alison Lapper pregnant** compare with the Elgin marbles

You might also be interested to look at Quinn’s reworking of Titian’s Venus of Urbino: ‘Portrait of Lara Stone’ Add an image of it here and also note some of the opposing critical comment on it.

Kate Moss symbolises “all the rocks on which people wreck their lives with, by chasing the unattainable things, the things that don’t exist (perfection, immortality) but which people aspire to, so this work is intended to reveal this as a kind of mask whereas Alison Lapper is about fighting (particularly in Fourth Plinth location) for motherhood, less discrimination about disability, for fairer recgognition.

Sandy Nairne calls it “a work of real significance in the tradition of self-portraiture”

1997 Sensation: Young British Art from the Saatchi Collection

Alison Lapper Pregnant on the Trafalgar Square Fourth Plinth

Self

The transformation proves, identity

Other sculptural self portraits?

Blood – symbolism of life giving, sacrifice, Jesus, death, war, disaster, wounds. Contrast between invisible support and visible horror – as soon as it is outside the body it is bad news!

Need for constant electricity – life support machine. Highlights vulnerability and dependence – metaphorically on ourselves, each other, society

Also look at The Origin of Species, made from frozen coconut milk (which in an emergency can be directly injected into the blood as a nutrient.

And Rubber Soul with a live N American wood frog inside the brain. Work displayed in the Egyptology gallery among the mummies, so it rivals the living dead.

Complete marbles series 1999-2001

In museums, the limbless bodies of classical sculptures are considered beautiful. Yet this does not happen when real people are limbless.

So use of marble is v significant as conventional, high art material.

New kind of heroism in Alison Lapper pregnant

Challenges viewers to confront deeply ingrained prejudices about physical deformity and to think about what it is that defines perfection/imperfection beauty/ugliness

Alison Lapper in Trafalgar Square: a contemporary heroine: a counter-balance to war heroes such as Lord Nelson and Napier.

Although bodies are visually comparable to frgaments in museums, they are whole people not fragments.

“Most monuments are commemorating past events; because Alison is pregnant it’s a sculpture about the future possibilities of humanity.”

Sphinx is a rebirth of Venus

It is a portrait of Kate Moss’ image not of herself.

The yoga pose, reminiscent of an Indian sculpture of Shiva is a contemporary scene about trying to affect the spirit through the body. It also seems to symbolise that Kate’s image is sculpted by society’s collective desire, contorted by outside influences. She is the reflection of ourselves, a knotted Venus for our age, a mirror, mystery, sphinx.

Rod Mengham

“Perhaps the two most remarkable groups of figurative sculptures produced in Britain in recent years have appeared contradistinctive while being directly complementary. The biological fantasies of Jake and Dinos Chapman have included single and conjoined figures equipped with various supplementary organs that satirise the prosthetic impulse in Western attitudes towards the human form. The sculptural portraits of Marc Quinn hve arrested that impulse by the provision of living referents for the aesthetic reception of body parts and incomplete torsos. Their candidness is both physical and conceptual, a reflection not simply of carving and polishing but also of documentary adequacy. The Chapman bothers are indebted to the traditions of the grotesque and the carnivalesque, with their emphasis on the body as a system of appetites, caught up in a perpetual transaction with the material world through a variety of forms of ingestion and expulsion. Marc Quinn has subverted the alternative tradition, that of the self-contained classical body, literal embodiment of the will to order, monumentally asphyxiated by the thin air of the ideal.

His uncanny simulation of a hyper-classical perfection nonetheless involves a kind of displacement of the artist from tradition, since the actual carving is performed by Italian stonemasons, working from casts provided by Quinn. The artist’s removal from the final stage of fabrication seems to locate is primary responsibility in this act of casting. The cast is the medium in which the classical tradition was most often experienced before changes in museum practices during the twentieth century….

The remarkable impact of Quinn’s work inheres partly in the organising parade at the centre of his activity: he is an experimental, conceptual artist whose work is almost entirely figurative. His working within the parameters of figuration seems to ensure the readability of individual sculptures, although these always turn out to be operating to a greater or lesser degree at sub-textual levels. The advanced legibility of the human form has enabled Quinn to enter the art world, the art market and to re-enter periodically the atmosphere of critical reception with a series of coups d’oeil. The first such intervention was the presentation of Self at the Sensation exhibition in 1991; this could of Quinn’s head, filled with nine pints of his own blood, was both visually stunning and psychosomatically unsettling. It was echoed in 2002 by the portrait of the artist’s son, Lucas, which used a mould of the child’s head as a container for his own placenta. Equally as dramatic was the use in 2004 of the vacant plinth in Trafalgar Square for a scaled up version of one of Quinn’s marble studies of Alison Lapper, the disabled artist with no arms and unusually shortened legs. But in many ways the most provoking assault on audience expectations came from Quinn’s decision to install his most celebrated non-figurative work ‘A Genomic Portrait: Sir John Sulston (2001) in a gallery entirely dedicated to figuration, the National Portrait Gallery.

This visually muted composition bears no immediate resemblance to its subject but is nevertheless a portrait in a true sense, since it consists of several strands of DNA in agar jelly. It represents the identity of an individual not through attention to visible signs of character or to social and cultural markers but in terms of basic cellular structure. In this it is a more authentic representation than examples of a figurative tradition which rely on conventions of interpretation frequently discredited.”