

Felicity Powell

FELICITY POWELL

DOMOBAAL

3 John Street, London WC1N 2ES, United Kingdom

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Strange fruit at Domobaal, a private gallery in a 17th century mansion in John Street WC1, with an exhibition of beautiful wax bas-reliefs by Felicity Powell. In 2000 the artist was the Winner of the Millennium Medal competition organised by The Royal Mint and The British Art Medal Society; and with Philip Attwood she recently curated and is exhibiting in 'Medals of Dishonour' at the British Museum, which includes Jake and Dinos Chapman, Cornelia Parker, Grayson Perry, Marcel Duchamp and other luminaries. At Domobaal there are some thirty examples of minutely detailed dream heads moulded on the blackened reverse of circular mirrors, each only 5.9" in diameter. The delicate profiles suggest a source in early Renaissance medals that the artist studied in her long research of museum collections. Powell has also made a record of her work in progress in a sequence of heads morphing together in an eerie transformation. She also presents a video *Crystal Ship* which captures the sight of a vessel that crossed a stormy horizon ablaze with jewelled lights, as she remarks "Like the carriage for some mythological goddess and part of the storm itself." The wax portraits are like mythic creatures; *Sponge Head Armed* shows a delicate profile swathed in curling snake like forms, porous like coral. *Fruiting Tree* has leafy branches sprouting from the head and mouth, the trunk emerging from a field of long grasses. The technique reaches a zenith in *Tentacles* where writhing octopus fronds curl and float eerily about an ivory profile. Wax is a surprisingly durable medium, as shown in the preserved 16th century models by Michelangelo up to Medardo Rosso's expressive portraits made at the turn of the 20th century. It carries an extraordinary quality of soft light in its essence, especially the way in which Powell allows the heads to gradually emerge from the blackened ground. She responds to the smallest inflections of detail in the variation of high and shallow relief, even making a lightly scored pattern on some of the features. The artist denies an obvious story to the creations, preferring the viewer to join with the mysterious act of imagination that allowed these fascinating and original artefacts to emerge.

Posted by [Nicholas James](#) on 6/22