

Unfolded

ISSUE 08



MAT KEMP

THE ART OF HUMOUR

During an open studio at Wimbledon Art Studios, we spoke to artist Mat Kemp about his sculptural work and why humour is an important part of his art and indeed why humour forms a key part of what shapes who we are as human beings. Kemp has been at the studios for just over two years, finding himself in a much more productive part of his life, now that he has a bigger space in which to work. As a trained sculptor, with degrees from Newcastle University (fine Art), The Royal College of Art (Bronze casting), and the Instituto Statale D'Art Florence (Sculpture), Kemp only recently devoted himself full time to the studio, having worked in advertising for twenty years with greeting cards (the successful Blah Blah Blah range of greetings cards produced for Paper link) and illustration.

Kemp's work is predominantly sculptural, combining a mixture of recycled, found and donated materials with more traditional elements such as bronze, plaster, acrylic and resin. He has said he 'loves the incidental, letting pieces evolve naturally and trusting instinctive decisions over which I have no control. Often I'm working on a piece and decide it would work better if combined with elements from another piece. The constant ingredient is make it and see'. Another ingredient is humour, 'I do not set out to make people laugh - maybe smile. If people can see that I had some fun making it then they will enjoy looking at it'.

Looking at some the works on display in his studio, 'Dont Know How We

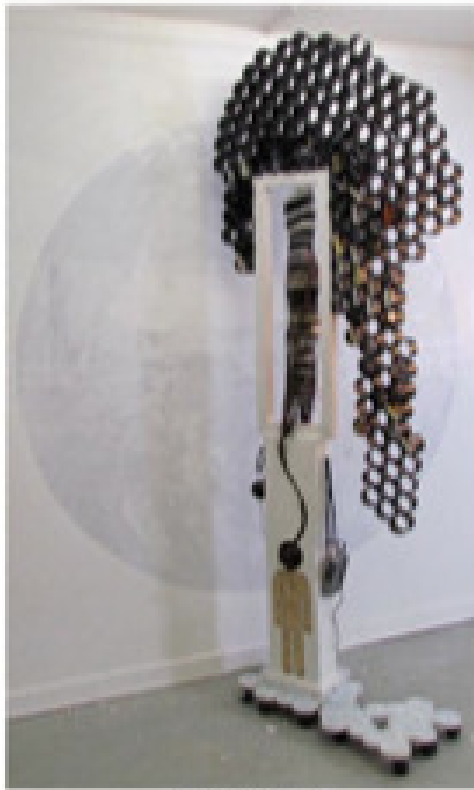


Got Here', is one of Kemp's favourite pieces and took six months to resolve. Created out of a conversation he had with a lady about an old Celtic maze, he started playing around with the idea. There are sections which are personally relevant to Kemp and on looking at the places in the maze, maybe



MULTITASKERS

"If people can see that I had some fun making it then they will enjoy looking at it"



MIXTAPE



TIGER TIGER BURNING BRIGHT,
(LION, GIRAFFE, IT JUST AIN'T RIGHT)



IMPRESSING THE GIRL



DON'T KNOW HOW WE GOT HERE

people can relate to it also - of experiences, moments... memories. Kemp draws inspiration from many areas, 'Spike Milligan is never far from the front of that list', but at the moment it happens to be, 'his little bro who is manfully fighting a horrible battle with the big C'.

Urban salvage and giving a new lease of life to objects permeates most of the work, with 'Impressing The Girls - flattened wheelbarrows (trampled by a digger) pieced with skateboards and other elements, creating a striking image. 'MixTape', a sculptural testament to 80s music features his original

www.matkemp.com

Article and Photography by Nandip Singh
Some images supplied with kind permission by artist

Sony Walkman and some cassettes. 'Spring in Winter', a piece put together for the open studio is made out of Gogo's Crazy Bones and Pokemon figures. The toy characters and animals set in plaster, are full of colour, in contrast with the tough monochrome media in which they are submerged. The humour is almost trying to break out of its shell.

Kemp has said that 'Art is about decision making, an opportunity to escape from a viewers perspective and as a creator. It is a vehicle for escape.' In a way, with such a complex world in which we live, Kemp's work takes us back to a adolescent view of humanity and humour - a sense of fun, coupled with a cheeky wit. You're not meant to laugh in art studios or galleries, as like libraries, there's an unspoken rule. Few people reflect on its use and implications within contemporary art. Laugh I did and so glad I could leave my serious thoughts at home for once.

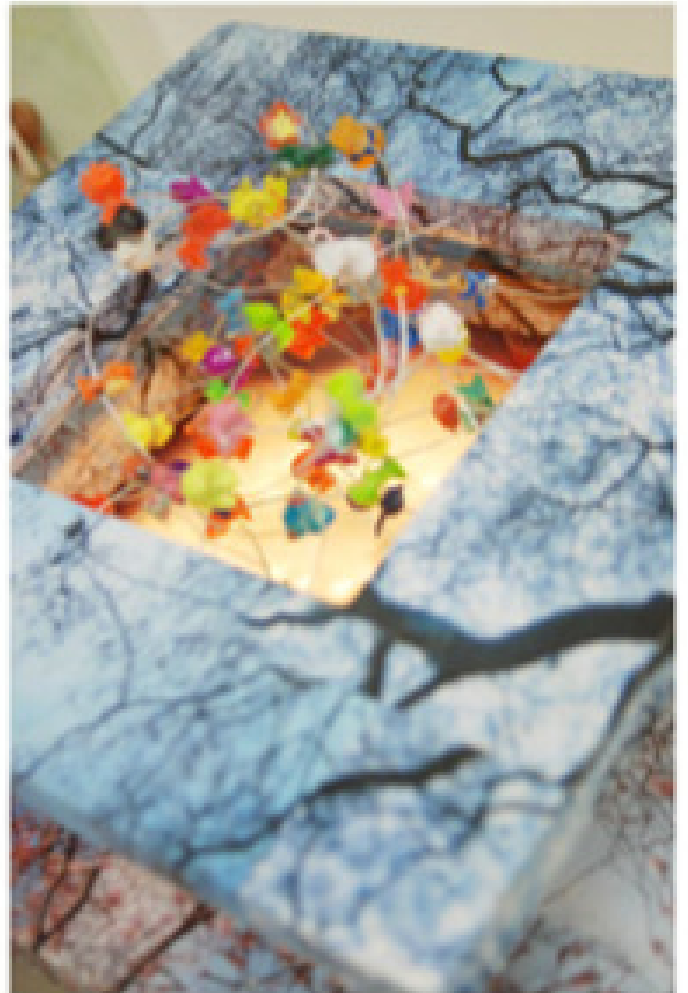
For the remainder of the year, Kemp is putting together a body of work for two shows, the affordable art fair in Battersea and then the open studio show at WAS in November - and in between - will 'spend most of the summer in the US (Fire Island New York)' with his 'wife's family, working and playing' (no doubt with a lot of humour thrown in)



POKEMON



SPRING IN WINTER



COSMOBIL



RETROMOBIL