

## Dylan Sheridan

### ~ Contemporary Art Tasmania ~

The **Feast of Fools** (Latin: *festum fatuorum, festum stultorum*) is the name given to a quasi-religious festive day celebrated in (European) churches during the middle ages. Something similar existed way before in Roman times. Ostensibly it's a one day social revolution, where all power, taste and formality is handed over to the peasants. In short, it was a massive piss-take on the pomp of the church-leaders and their procedures, where, annually, a town Fool was chosen to lead a church service, speaking & inspiring gibberish in their congregation, along with animal noises, brash drunkenness and lots of other unruly (normally illegal) chaotic shenanigans that bled out into the streets for continued party-times.

Art Galleries of all ilks have inherited religiosity. Thus, somewhere along the way, every year, in every region, some artist, is unknowingly, secretly, unofficially crowned their Bean-King/Queen, or Fool. Duchamp was surely crowned a few times, also Warhol, Banksy, etc. These are the grander examples, but there's a fool in every parish.

One obvious aspect of art, and a big one of contemporary art, is to question our (the consumer's) ability to interpret data into something of worth, or value. Art that makes that value-process difficult is an Artist's way of challenging the viewer - taunting them with 'Are you smart enough?' 'Are you imaginative enough?' 'Are you resilient enough?' Dylan Sheridan definitely skates in this arena, and mockingly prays to Hephaestus for Art Critics to write something 'smart' about his work. Touche. Of course the mid-DIY home-reno look of Dylan's work screams a plethora of contemporary pop-culture, nay, late-capitalist franchised-drama that prods & pokes at the viewer with wry darkish comedy. Whether a beleaguered, or transfixed consumer, it's reality is omnipresent. We the viewer may transmogrify into celebrity-judges a'la reality TV show, or become proud owners of a new home (or at least a new rumpus room), or shoppers of a new fandangled machine in a tradies-tools warehouse, or zapped into futuristic humans, etc. Conversely, one may be steeled by the rejection of all of these aforementioned worlds, and rise above them, buoyed by one's resilience and imaginative solutions.

Once you have made digestive-peace with this conundrum, the next piece intermittently scraps a fork against a dinner plate. This is utterly garish. Nightmarish. Horrific. Offensive. Physiologically repulsive. Then you

catch yourself, and refuse to be flipped around like an emotionally-weak rag-doll, and ignite yourself to laugh at this terrorism. Eventually the laughter becomes genuine; you approvingly lick your wounds, happy for the provocation that has made you stronger.

Then darker, less comedic works come to the fore: dystopian machine-animals that mimic nature in a playful, yet obtuse & stilted way. Is it the simulated shell or bones of a plastic puppy or kitten that begs to play 'catch' with you, tapping their prize on the ground to summon your attention? Are they playing? Or sounding the alarm? Same with the pelican beak-clack and immature bird-chirping of a plastic air-duct/hand-dryer/robotic mouth-piece that wails of global extinction events and natural-world end-times. Why else have these machines? They'd only ever be truly 'needed' in truly blighted eras.

Yes – a classic Grand Guignol of the Fool, is to whack you over the head with something so dark and depressing that you stop laughing.

But, join the Fool.

Laugh.