





## Knick Knacks – A Proposal for Trafalgar Square’s Fourth Plinth

Matthew Darbyshire, 2012

### Statement of Concept.

*Knick Knacks* transforms the Fourth Plinth in to a domestic mantel or shelf. It builds on an image I recently produced for the *Guardian* newspaper that tried to decipher two mainstream adverts in its attempt to sum up our times through the consumables that surround us.

*Knick Knacks* reflects on feelings of emptiness and nostalgia, two sentiments that although I’m sure can be traced back through every generation, seem particularly felt at present.

What I find most intriguing about today’s nostalgia is the way we romanticise objects not through treasured originals but through veneered reproductions – a sort of emptying out via simplified casts masked in artificial coatings.

I don’t think this is just the age-old tendency of contemporising a bygone object in terms of its materiality or function – our current trend of masking, smothering or veiling is conducted with the intention to disguise (rather than renew or improve) aspects that, if we scratch beneath the surface, often in fact have associations most of us would prefer to reject.

From the pop to the patriotic and the colonial to the kitsch, *Knick Knacks* hopes to confuse its encounterer as they work their way through the layers of meaning, potency and reference – peeling away the seemingly harmless, soft and rounded surfaces of the contemporary parodic arrangement to discover a rather more jagged and sinister status that is more evocative of the objects’ fusty and jingoistic history.

*Knick Knacks* hopes to work on an immediate level for its fleeting observers and a slower, more sustained level for those wanting to engage beyond its immediate, day-glo impact – a sort of ‘seduction and repulsion’ mechanism with its critique buried safely beneath the surface.



Guardian artwork



Heal’s homeware advert



Nissan car advert

### Technical description.

The eight opaque elements would be 3D scanned and modeled from the below collectibles, CNC routed in polyurethane foam and then laminated in fibre-glass before being chromed, sprayed and flocked. The single clear element would be modeled in much the same way but then cast in clear tinted resin. All objects would be secured to the plinths mounting plate and their surfaces treated to become fully weatherproof.

