

Simulacra Jason Ellis



OliverSearsGallery

A Greek Statue

With the help of people and other disasters,
time has worked pretty hard on it.
First it took away the nose, later the genitals,
one by one fingers and toes,
with the passing of years arms, one after the other,
right thigh and left thigh,
back and hips, head and buttocks,
and what fell off, time broke into pieces,
into chunks, into gravel, into sand.
When someone living dies this way,
much blood flows with each blow.
Yet marble statues perish pale
and not always all the way.
Of the one we are speaking of, only a torso remains,
like breath held under exertion
as it now must
draw unto
itself
all the grace and weight
of what has been lost.
And it pulls this off,
pulls this off still,
pulls us in and dazzles,
dazzles and endures—
Time deserves an honorable mention here,
as it stopped midway
and left something for later.

Wisława Szymborska

Oliver Sears Gallery is pleased to present the first exhibition in our new home on Fitzwilliam St. Upper, Dublin 2.

Simulacra is a series of low relief carvings by Irish artist, Jason Ellis, one of the pre-eminent stone carvers working in Ireland today. The exhibition comprises twelve works which are drawn from a series of renowned stone reliefs from art history: the Parthenon, the Antiquities rooms in the Louvre and Donatello have all provided the core subject matter. Some works are close copies of sections of these iconic sculptures, others are drawn from the artist's imagination.

Ellis has worked for twenty years as a conservator, restoring and maintaining many of the best known public sculptures in Ireland. He has deployed many of the skills and artifices of that discipline to give these contemporary works the appearance of antiquity.

Individually and collectively this body of work succeeds in re-evaluating these towering artistic benchmarks from the past. Here we can understand them afresh for our times on a domestic scale. In 'Athenian', a detail of the horses' legs from the Parthenon are reconfigured and becomes a symbol of flight, universal for any age.

In 'Feast of Herod', Donatello's masterpiece on the baptismal font in the Battistero di San Giovanni in Sienna, a guest at the feast is covering his eyes from the horror of Herod being presented with the head of John the Baptist on a platter. In Ellis' version he closes in on the figure of the guest. Out of context, the figure's expression represents revulsion, grief or shock and the physical impulse to shield one's eyes from the world. Similarly, 'Ministering Angel I' from Donatello's 'The Angels attending the dead Christ' takes the mantle of a broader human instinct. Ellis' versions, one in Carrara marble, the other in Kilkenny limestone depict the tenderness of a human touch, without the context of this key biblical drama. The imagery in stone draws the viewer to physically touch the cold, smooth surface. This is art almost becoming the object of depiction rather than mere representation. Stone carvers are a rare breed and *Simulacra* reflects an artist who is clear about what he needs to say and knows exactly how to say it.

Athenian

Carrara marble
34H x 84W x 5D cm
2019



Clonfert Mermaid

Portuguese limestone
35H x 60W x 2D cm
2018



Feast of Herod

Kilkenny limestone
26H x 19W x 4D cm
2019



Fragment / Kythnos

Persian marble
59H x 43W x 3D cm
2017



Heraklion

Carrara marble
29H x 10W x 6D cm
2017



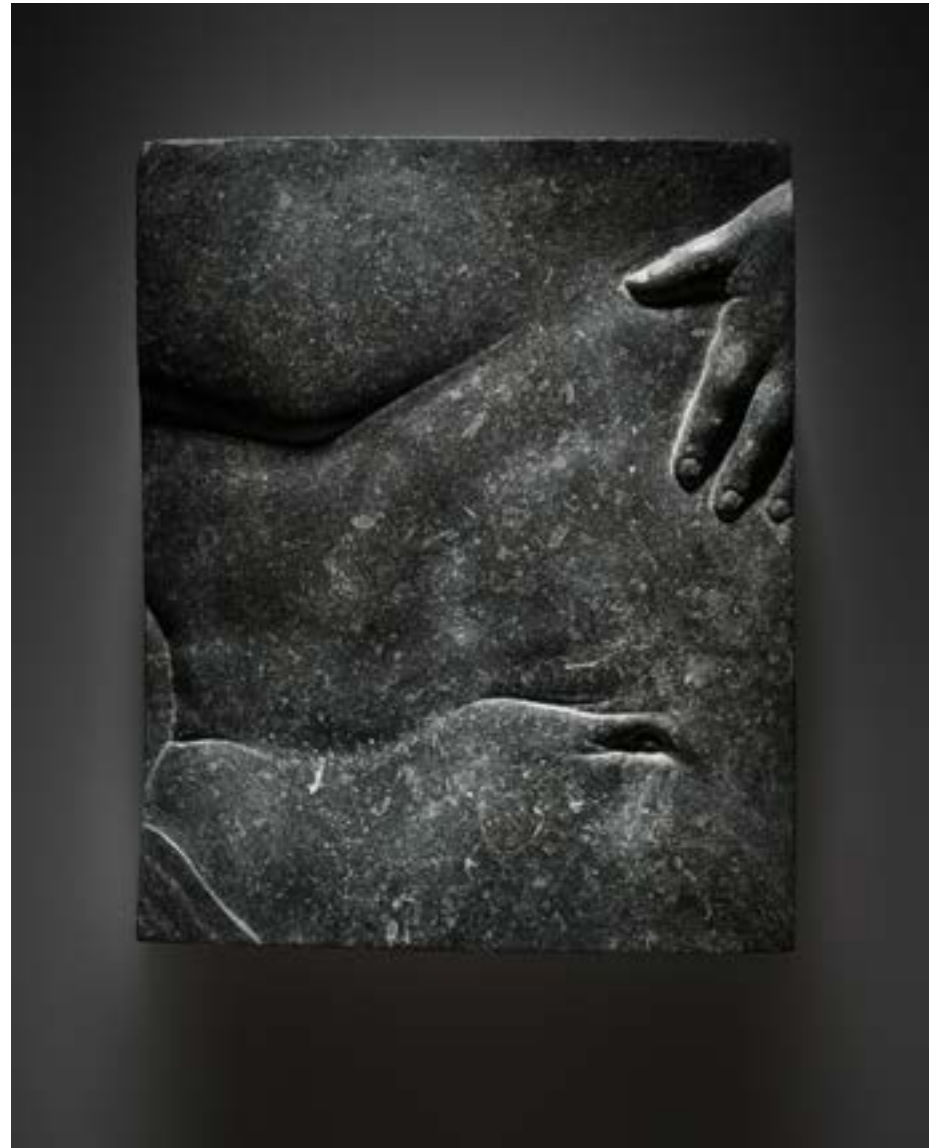
Ministering Angel I

Carrara marble, nero grande marble
31H x 43W x 5D cm
2017



Ministering Angel II

Kilkenny limestone
21H x 17W x 4D cm
2017



Nineveh

Portuguese limestone
35H x 60W x 2D cm
2017



Nubian

Sandstone, serpentine
43H x 34W x 16D cm
2019



Paros

Persian marble
72H x 32W x 3D cm
2018



Pazzi Madonna

Carrara marble
21H x 39W x 3D cm
2018



Vesuvius

Slate
25H x 20W x 2D cm
2019



Jason Ellis studied sculpture at the University of Chichester. His tutor, Alan Saunders, had studied under Anthony Caro at Central Saint Martins. Following his degree, he trained and worked as a sculpture conservator in London for 8 years and Ireland for a further 12 years. In 2006 he left conservation and turned exclusively to producing his own sculpture. The combination of a fine art background and training in conservation has influenced his art practice and his appreciation of the medium of stone and the skill of the artisan is acute. The quality of execution of each work testifies to the patience he had to learn on the bench.

Ellis's work can be found in various private and public collections including the Irish State Art Collection, Office of Public Works, Ireland, Bank of Ireland, University College Dublin, University College Cork, Trinity College, Dublin, and the Irish Presidential Collection. Commissions include The McDonogh Stone for the Druid Theatre, Galway, 2009, and -hedra at the 12th Venice Architecture Biennale. In 2014 he was invited into the National Self-Portrait Collection of Ireland. He showed at the Royal Ulster Academy in Belfast as an invited artist in 2016. In 2017 he exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy Annual Show in Dublin as an invited artist and the following year he was shortlisted for the RHA/Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland's Art Award. He lives and works in Dublin.

Acknowledgements

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Jason Ellis 26/9/19