

Soiled

The ceramic wares, watercolours and etchings in Emily Hunt's *Soiled* picture a world as rotten as it is fecund, with all things at once burgeoning and collapsed. Orgiastic-decomposing masses of fingers-cigarettes-penises-eyes-tongues writhe around and cave in on themselves. Hybrid, interlocking trans-forms regurgitate, defecate, ejaculate, self-replicate and dissipate. Things thrust and ooze, creep up and dribble down, sprawl and submerge.

Hunt cites Priapus – Greco-Roman god of gardens, growth and the phallus – as a guiding figure for this body of work. Cursed with impotence while he was still in Aphrodite's womb, the perennially frustrated Priapus is best known for his enormous and always erect penis. Sigmund Freud, whose extensive collection of antiquities includes a number of Roman, Etruscan, Egyptian and Japanese phallic amulets, referred to Priapus's permanent hard-on as "a wish fulfillment representing the opposite of psychological impotence." As always in Freud, the excess points to a lack.

I don't have a penis, but I'm writing this in the company of quite a few of them. I recently visited Hunt in her ceramic studio at Zentrum für Keramik in Berlin, while she was making the artworks for *Soiled*, and she gave me a bunch of her tests from the kiln: small, intricate glazed porcelain priapic statuettes, which have taken up residence on my desk. She made them after becoming fascinated with the many ancient figurines that Freud had on his writing desk; a motley arrangement that he once referred to as "my old and grubby gods."

The objects that Freud collected throughout his life, and the collecting compulsion more generally, informed the making of the works in *Soiled*. Dizzying detailed, they give form to precarious states where fertility is entangled with festering unrecognisables, and prowess with desperate wastedness. There are only parts and holes here, no wholes. Coherence arises tentatively from the rank, guzzling chaos.

- Amelia Groom

Soiled at The Commercial Gallery
13th of December - 21st December 2013
8th January - 18th January 2014

Clockwise from top: *The Charlatan*, 2013. Hard ground etching on paper. *The Vase Plague*, 2013. Hard ground etching on paper. *The Age of Waste*, 2013. Hard ground etching on paper.

