

'Curiouser & curiouser!'

By Karl Chitham

What most commonly comes to mind when thinking of the term faux are things of frivolity and fancy. Fake 'fun' fur coats, trompe l'oeil pool-side scenery and plastic wood-grain bowls sit alongside entire simulated worlds in which you can ski all year round regardless of the season or enter a virtual killing environment without the impediments of morality and pain. 'Fakery' has become such a common aspect of the everyday that there is often a tendency for it to go unnoticed. The things we take at face value as authentic can actually derive from unoriginal beginnings and often belie an extensive and altogether unexpected history. This slippage in faux provenance has resulted in a lack of applied meaning, superficiality replacing any sense of depth or understanding.

By writing *Alice in Wonderland* Lewis Carroll constructed a faux world in which every character, setting and prop displayed qualities that appeared to contradict the practical rules of reality. *Wonderland* was based on romantic literary notions where ideas of indulgence and absurdity were enhanced by a removal of the laws of common and everyday life. However, Carroll made sure that his fantastic tale held recognizable elements for his readers. Not only did he write a simple little story for a girl called Alice but he also created an imaginary world in which the ridiculous and unusual were celebrated.

'Capability' Brown, a celebrated landscape designer, was renowned for his sublime English garden landscapes, with rolling green hills, immense lakes complete with graceful white swans and cleverly placed castle ruins, grottoes and Greek temples. His goal was to re-design the natural environment with all of the unpleasant aspects edited out. By achieving this he was able to ensure that the beauty, majesty and mystery of nature were captured for all to admire without having to unduly exert themselves. Brown's staid natural environments were later to become the model for the archetypal English park. His harmonious rearrangement of nature for the aristocracy of the time would be replicated for the masses throughout the colonies. These settings of quiet contemplation would eventually make way for overcrowded music festivals and the pristine vistas would become compromised as cities grew. Brown's idealized version of nature for the everyday ponderings of the rich was to become a repository for the everyday trials of all.

However, Brown's expansive parks, which would often be constructed over decades and cost immense sums, paled in comparison to the incredible opulence of King Ludwig II of Bavaria's architectural fantasies. Ludwig's fascination with recreating the glories of the past led him to commission three magnificent palaces. Within these amazing edifices are examples of Ludwig's desire to simulate design ideals he admired and romantic notions he aspired to. He had his architects create Moorish throne rooms with life-size porcelain peacocks, an artificial indoor lake grotto with dramatic electric lighting effects and hidden furnaces to keep the temperature at a tropical 20 degrees in the middle of winter, and an indoor woodland forest with rustic huts and imported tree snakes. He even went so far as to replicate his favourite building, the palace of the Sun King, *Versailles*. However, Ludwig's most memorable legacy, *Neuschwanstein* has gone on to become the most recognizable castle in the world. Its ivory coloured walls, proliferation of turrets and picturesque mountainous setting have become the stereotype of the modern fairy-tale castle. A place in which he sort to live in his own make believe world has now become the cliched fantasy model for millions, replicated and reinforced endlessly by the Hollywood Movie machine.

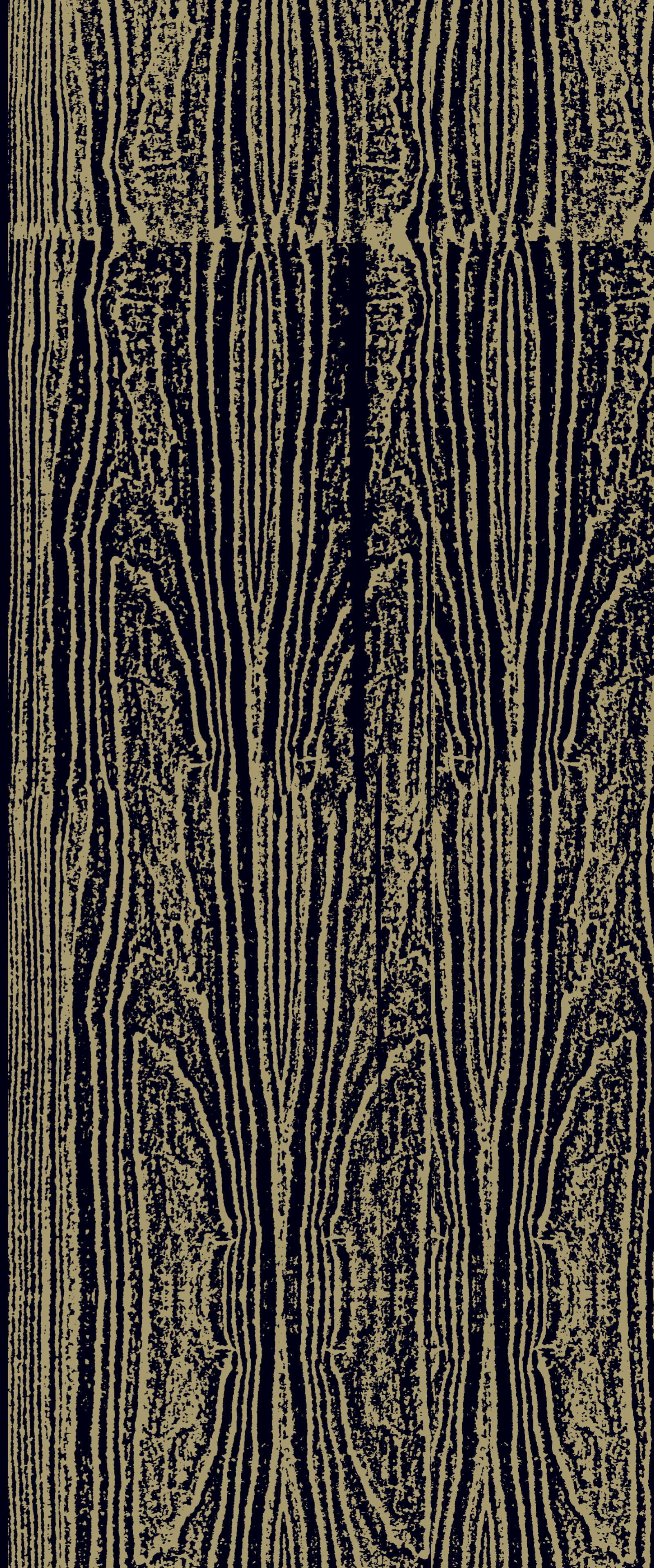
Ludwig II was not alone in the replication of the architectural styles of other cultures. German and French shopping arcades from the time of the industrial revolution were predominantly modelled on the North African bazaars. What would have been a ramshackle of stalls in markets was replaced by windowed shop fronts; the crowded, narrow open-air alleyways were widened and covered over with impressive vaulted ceilings of steel; and the contents offered by the vendors became less about the everyday and more about the strange, exotic and luxurious. These arcades were the exclusive domain of the wealthy and you could purchase all manner of curios from around the world. The traditional European arcade has now been replaced by an altogether more synthetic simulated environment, the modern Shopping Mall.

"Dear, dear! How queer everything is to-day! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've been changed in the night?" ...Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way.

(LEWIS CARROLL, ALICE IN WONDERLAND)

It does not seem so difficult to put yourself in Alice's place if faced with the same topsy-turvy world of *Wonderland*. Alice had grown so used to the extraordinary that the everyday seemed to pale in comparison. Similarly we have become accustomed to the things around us and that we take for granted that we no longer notice its lineage. The local park, toy castle and shopping mall have lost their points of reference as each successive generation become familiar with the version that they know and understand.

Our need for ever more excessive experiences has led to a lack of understanding of the things around us and how they came to be. *The Faux* exhibition is an exploration of the domestic which we take for granted. The objects in the exhibition have all been created to encourage a certain fascination and to increase our awareness of the everyday objects around us. It is an opportunity for the ordinary to take on extraordinary proportions and for those around them to sit up and take notice.





Paul Maseyk

ENLARGED MAILBOX AND PARAPHERNALIA (detail)

I was interested in flexing my rudimentary wood-working skills on something to house an oversize milk bottle.

Janet Green

NZR CUP (detail)

This cup was made for an exhibition at Avid Gallery entitled *Homework*, the brief being to make a New Zealand Icon. I had been working on a series for, *The History of the Cup* so it seemed appropriate to continue with this theme. The New Zealand Railway cup was among the first mass produced domestic pottery made in New Zealand and as such has become an Icon. My affection for the NZR cup began in the 1960s on train trips to Auckland, when cups of stewed tea were served up in the middle of the night. I decided to make my own cup on a giant scale as a homage to the NZR cup. This cup is hand built unlike the original which is made using industrial processes.

Katy Wallace

ILLUSIONS OF GRANDEUR (detail)

The facade replaces the actual in this work, freeing you from the permanence of ownership while still providing a sense of grandeur and tradition – Pack-flat freedom folded out to architectural establishment.

Amanda Sorenson

REGULAR HOUSE-HOLD CLEANERS (detail)

Mass produced throwaway plastic vessels are the consumerist objects of our time. Sold by the millions and crammed full of toxic gloop ironically they end up creating more mess than they clean-up.

Fran Allison

QUEEN OF THE 'BAKE-OFF'

Crowns and cake tins are rich with memories. Crowns allude to treasure, authority, and reference our cultural experience from childhood fantasy to colonial repression. Cake tins hide treasure, and also contain powerful childhood associations.

This combination of the two is a badge of recognition for the Queen of the 'bake-off'.

Nikki Soons

SOMETHING LITTLE SOMETHING SWEET (detail)

Combining a love of the miniature with a love of sweet treats, this series plays on ideas of domestic bliss and keeping up appearances.

Philip Jarvis

COLGATE TOOTHPASTE, ROCKS TOOTHBRUSH AND MACLEANS TOOTHPASTE (detail)

Protects, strengthens, fights, freshens. A whole new experience of clean.

Susannah Bridges

DOILY WORKS

The Doily Works are a radical extension of my cylindrical ceramic light and vessel forms. The cylinder series evokes a sense of formality – they are geometric, crisp and clean. I applied this notion of formality to objects in other contexts – and used the idea of a table setting at a formal occasion as a starting point to create new work.

The doilies that were once cotton and thread are porcelain now... they are frozen in form and their function has changed. This transformation asks the viewer to consider the processes and materials from which the old and new objects are made and the perceived hierarchy of the objects in their original and transformed states.

Elizabeth McClure

DOMESTIC SCIENCE (detail)

This work is a continuation of the series *everyday things – extraordinary objects*. Here, the everyday things are not necessarily ones that all of us deal with everyday, but in their use they affect us greatly. They are about science and art and the everyday home and the complex overlay of these things in our lives today. They are about the 'cover up'... the hidden unknowns and coding in science and its at times insidious presence. There is so much in our lives that we entrust to others, particularly in the area of nourishment... food and drink production, cosmetics - really, so often, so many of us have no idea what we are putting in or onto our bodies. And yet... we continue to trust that all is as it seems or is stated.

Vaune Mason

BUTTERFLIES IN MY TUMMY (detail)

The rabbit, an iconic theme in children's tales (from the Velveteen Rabbit to Peter Rabbit) is the ultimate in soft and squishy comfort. My goal here was to investigate the *essence of Rabbit*. The 'hand made' deliberate stitching and antique feel of this work is a hook to sentiment. Some of these pieces are housings for jewellery: *Butterflies in my tummy* for instance, refers to the pliqué a jour necklace of butterflies nesting in the belly pouch of a large Bunny. Others in this group are objects. *Twitch* is a bare representation of the element of a rabbit... a soft looking resting rabbit shape... conveying the idea of *Rabbit*, soft, breathing, alive?... without being that at all.

Regan Gentry

CHOPS: AXE, SAW, CLEAVER, CHOP (detail)

Chops has developed from a work called *Chop Chop* which is part of a large solo exhibition called *Of Gorse of Course*. *Chops* draws together a collection of objects which all orbit around the multiple definitions of the word chop. Together with the fact they are made of gorse wood the collection illustrates the idea of how forests were chopped down to make way for the production of animals which in turn would be chopped up into meat chops. The objects all inherently invoke a sense of violence, against the animals and the land. Gorse has been 'farmed' in the sense that it was grown for firewood, but mostly gorse has just taken over land that was cleared for farming and has become too uneconomic to clear again.

Madeleine Child

POP POP (detail)

Anything cheesy and extruded has always been a major food group in our family... (nostalgia, denial, temptation, bingeing)... I am indebted to my kids for the opportunity to study popcorn closely and overcome a prejudice. Food is increasingly *big*... loaded, political - where? what? why? how? when? who?

Megan Hansen-Kjarboi

EAU DE TOILET (detail)

Tui, historically referred to as the Parson bird, sit and shit upon rolls of cross embossed toilet paper. *eau de toilet* satirises colonialism and indigenty, as well as the cross-over and clash between the sacred and the profane.