

THE AFFLUENZA EXHIBITION
PRESS RELEASE

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ARTIST STATEMENT

Alexandra Valy's work so far has been diverse – each piece a tableau that tells its own story, each a separate 'world' with its own *raison d'être*.

Nevertheless, common themes can be found, as well as the same idiosyncrasy and the same sense of aesthetics. The work draws heavily on the language of mythology and fairy tales, as well as elements of popular culture such as nursery rhymes and everyday sayings and symbols.

Borrowed from the same context, the titles play a very important role in the meaning of the work, though more often as an addition rather than as an explanation.

The work is highly symbolic but the symbols are sometimes ambiguous, with no key offered. Her intention is more to inspire a general feeling than it is to deliver a specific message.

Alexandra Valy's work is contemporary and fits within a genre of sculpture that uses symbols and displaces realistic references to the everyday in order to construct new meaning.

THE AFFLUENZA EXHIBITION – FIRST PIECE:

You only have to believe

2008

H 80cm, W 160cm, D 110cm

Painted fibreglass and swan wing feather

Inspired by the children's story of *Dumbo* the elephant, this piece deals with the pain and anxiety of striving for an unattainable goal.

With the cult of celebrity widespread in our society, more and more young people are desperate to become rich and famous – their dreams exploited by the entertainment industry, in particular reality TV and talent shows.

A perverse twist on the positive thinking philosophy spreads the belief that 'wanting something really badly' is the key to obtaining what we think we want, but this in effect only engenders feelings of desperation and places a power over our lives outside of ourselves.

The elephant head is a trophy – caught, killed and hung up on the wall – but still holding the 'magic' feather that was supposed to make its dreams come true.

The piece is lifesize (the size of the head of a young bull) and painted a glitzy high shine white – a white elephant.



'You only have to believe'





THE AFFLUENZA EXHIBITION – SECOND PIECE:

People in glass houses

2008

H 80cm, W 50cm, L 80cm

Glass, lead, portable television

This piece is inspired by an interest in our primary need for shelter as well as a certain restlessness with the way we tend to live in our modern-day shelters – our homes. Many of us live in isolation from our neighbours (and maybe even from the people in our own household), but with the television constantly switched on, as an illusion of life. We are cocooned in our own private – separate – universe, with the television as our window to the outside world, and we take its messages for truth.

After dark, what passers-by can see whilst walking through a residential area are rows of windows lit with flickering television screens. Tired from a long day at work, modern day TV programming allows us more than ever to live vicariously through our televisions: we can set off on adventurous journeys, interact with wildlife, learn to cook, look better, fall in love, live exciting lives – until we switch off the screen.

In this piece the television is the ‘light in the dark’ but the small scale of the piece and its setting in the dark evokes feelings of loneliness and isolation.





