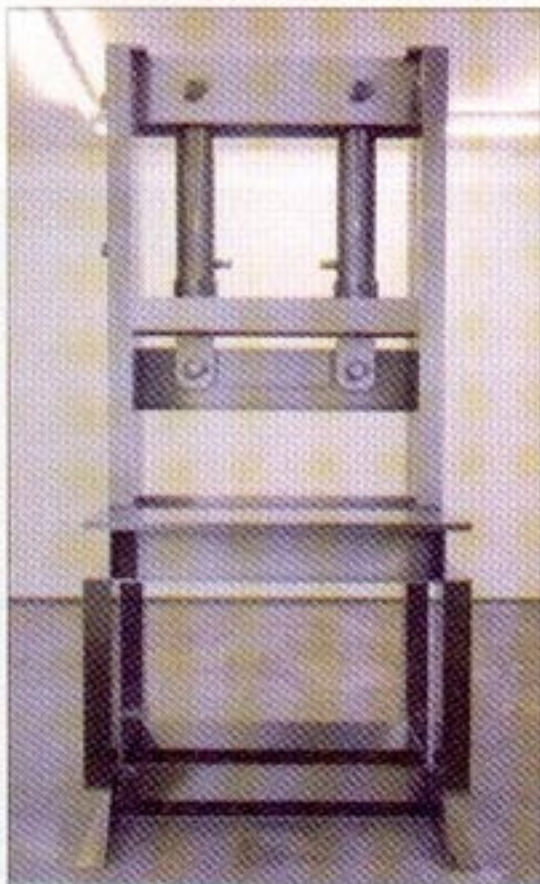


Rupert Norfolk



'Untitled (Guillotine)', 2007



Dicksmith East End

At first, Norfolk's two sculptural pieces seem like just normal-looking objects – albeit ones reflecting a specific interest in processes of industrial design and manufacture. Dominating the gallery space is a huge, metal guillotine, with thick, I-beam struts, sharp edges, and powerful pistons; lying on the floor nearby is a carpet, starkly striped in a

black-and-white 'zip' pattern, and scrunched into elegant ripples and ridges which disturb its modernist regularity.

Walking around the carpet, though, it soon becomes clear that, while some of its folds are real, others are mere depictions: perspectival distortions, abrupt pattern breaks, and shaded patches to signify shadows – all incorporated into the design of the fabric itself. This theme of self-depiction likewise applies to the guillotine, its surface lacquered in a shiny, metallic greyscale, so that the exaggerated modulations of shadow and reflection give the object a disquieting, contradictory appearance: both apparently advertising its own authenticity, while simultaneously making it seem strangely two-dimensional, cartoonishly static and unreal. Yet for all the obvious reference towards techniques of *trompe-l'oeil*, Norfolk's work is less about visual trickery than generating a moment of conceptual ambivalence, something that seems to oscillate between object and image, between presentation and representation.

There's also a third piece – a small, discreet pencil drawing – which explores ideas to do with natural form and beauty. Resembling, at a distance, a quick, delicate sketch of a young woman's head and shoulders, closer up it resolves into a highly detailed, almost photorealistic study of the thin, scythe-like leaves of a plant; and seems to evoke the tenuousness and fickleness of artistic depiction itself.

Gabriel Coxhead