

# Europa (Gwartheg y Llyn)

Christopher Collier

The work deals with the dangers of asking too many questions - of looking a gift horse (or bull) in the mouth. The flipper adorned bull skull suggests the sub-aquatic cattle of mythology, the Europa story of the Greeks, the Gwartheg y Llyn here in Wales. Such supernatural cattle could be bountiful or domineering but question them too deeply and they can disappear from whence they came taking their blessings with them. Drawing parallels between the two tales; the idea of something defiled, an action that can not be undone - the proverbial split milk; the work examines vulnerability and the dependence. Suggesting religious iconography with its garland of flowers, or recalling the cross or manger, it examines the idea that the sacred cow is beyond question. How we define this 'sacred cow' is left, literally, hanging. It is at once the twelve-starred banner of Europa that sustains agriculture but keeps it in thrall of dependence. But it is also the self-examining Narcissus of the artist, equally vulnerable to the political bottle-feed of subsidy. It is worth noting that the national flower of Wales hails from the genus of Narcissus and it is perhaps our artists more than most who are prone to indulging in the dangers of self-questioning. Ultimately the work seeks to draw parallels between the plight of farmers and that of artists: both creating, both to an extent marginalised and under-valued, both often struggling with an irrational compulsion to maintain their vocation and both vulnerable to the extent that they are often controlled by the subsidy culture that sustains them. They stand, like the milk-white bull, beautiful and powerful but with a perpetual bolt-gun to the forehead.

Christopher Collier 2009.