



Rory Menage: New Work

PV Thursday 26 May, 6-9pm

The Averard Hotel, 10 Lancaster Gate, London W2 3LH
27 May – 4 June 2016 // open daily 12-6pm, and by appointment

Eleven heads cast in bronze, iron and aluminium, unspeaking and inscrutable. Three torsos, like beaten breastplates. These are Rory Menage's fallen kings, empresses, warriors and sentinels, sculptures forged by a close reading of *Ozymandias*, Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet-memorial to the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses II. In 1817, the year Shelley wrote his first draft of the poem, the British Museum announced their acquisition from Upper Egypt of the monumental granite torso of Ramesses, who the Greeks knew as Ozymandias. It is this name Shelley chooses for his King of Kings.

*'I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'*

To stand in the foundry at Huddersfield and see one of Menage's iron heads being born is to catch echoes of these influences. And it is like a birth, with a great shaking and rupturing of casing and tumbling of soot, and in among this unpromising murk: the crown of the head, from a steel cradle of dark sand, then forehead, then frown, and wrinkled lip, and neck like a column, broken at the shoulders.

The iron is Etna dark. This head – 23stone and 6lbs, the weight of two men – trussed in chains and lowered on a pulley is like a Deposition: the metal links are a crown of thorns, the wooden splints like splinters of the Crucifixion.

This is the grief and humiliation of Ozymandias, buried, forgotten, his imperial hubris rewarded with a statue toppled, a shattered face, an empire sunk in sand.



Here, in the Averard Hotel, itself a place of faded splendour, are further fragments. You feel the excitement of the first unearthing of the Fayum portraits or the Valley of the Kings masks in lapis and gold. Where have they come from, these ibis-necked busts and reticent guardsmen?

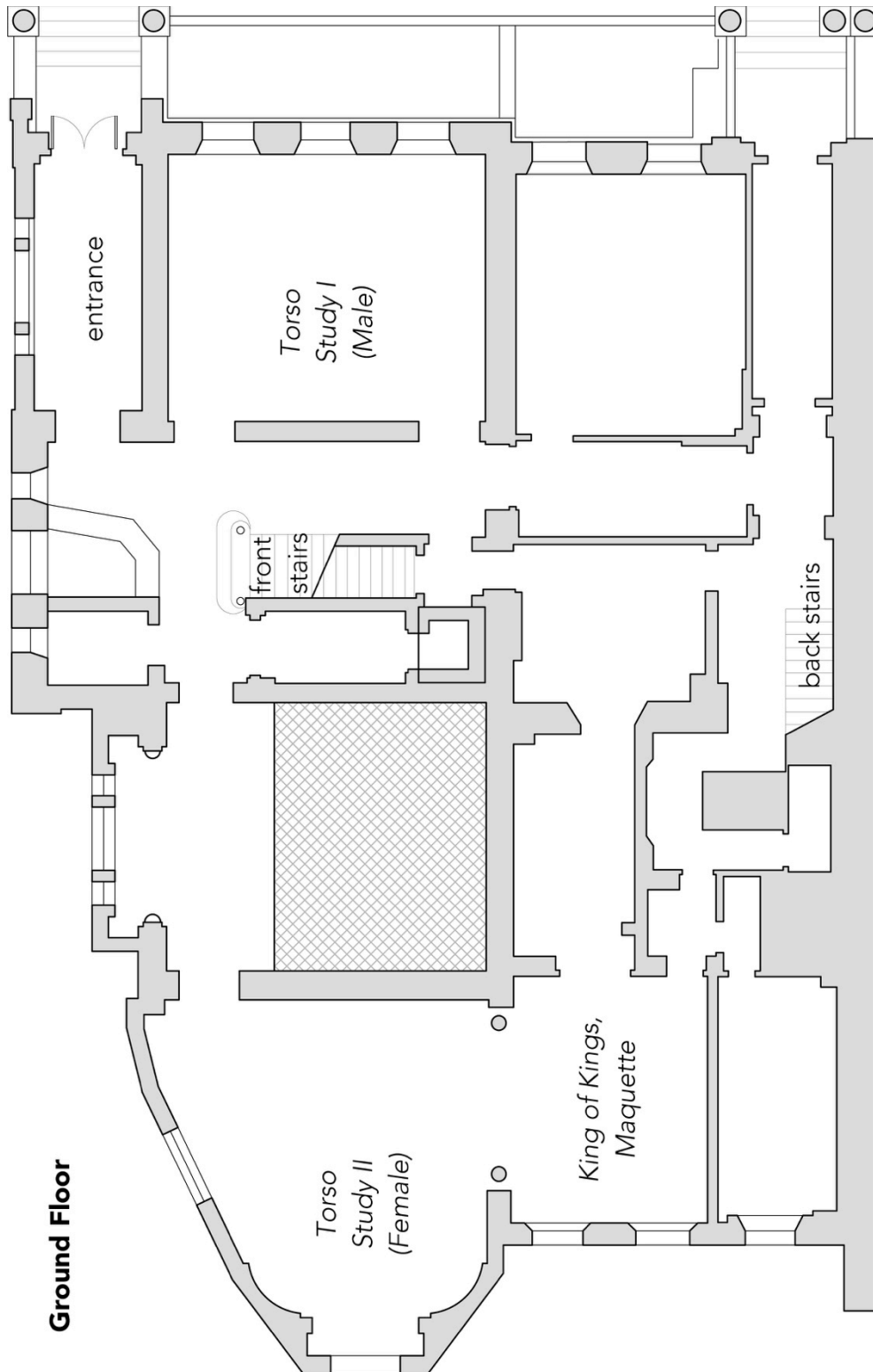
Somewhere, you think, looking at Menage's bronze and iron helms and the Ozymandias, born in heat and dirt and coughing dust and infernal noise and drills and hammer blows, there must be, beneath the Yorkshire ironstone seams, the rest of this colossal wreck: a pedestal, two vast and trunkless legs of stone, the hand that mocked, and other lifeless things.

Menage has brought the shattered visage back to life. Of Ozymandias, King of Kings, only this remains.

King of Kings by Laura Freeman, 24 May 2016

List of works:

1. *Torso Study I (Male)*, 2016, iron and Corten steel base, 189x55x31cm, unique
2. *Torso Study I (Female)*, 2016, iron and Corten steel base, 189x33x44cm, unique
3. *King of Kings*, 2016, iron, 62x52x38cm, unique
4. *Torso Study II (Male)*, 2016, aluminium, 95x56x23cm, unique
5. *Seeing the Rock Drill*, 2015, painted bronze, 40x27x27cm, 1/3 + 1AC
6. *Man (Proto-Cubist Form) III*, 2016, painted bronze, 37x25x24cm, 1/3 + 1AC
7. *Man (Proto-Cubist Form) II*, 2015, painted bronze, 30x21x21cm, 1/3 + 1AC
8. *Woman (Proto-Cubist Form) II*, 2015, painted bronze, 30x21x21cm, 1/3+1AC
9. *Man (Proto-Cubist Form)*, 2015, iron, 40x27x27cm, unique
10. *Head of a Woman (Landscape Form)*, 2015, iron, 51x21x18cm, unique
11. *Study for Ozymandias I*, 2016, iron, 22x22x7cm, unique
12. *Bust of a Woman II*, 2016, iron, 36x22x17cm, unique
13. *Study for Ozymandias II*, 2016, iron, 22x22x7cm, unique
14. *Bust of a Man III*, 2016, iron, 40x21x21cm, unique





First floor

