

Heartney, Eleanor. "Jeffrey Vallance: Tanya Bonakdar." *Art in America* (April 2010), p. 123-124.

Jeffrey Vallance: *Vladimir Lenin: Relics of the USSR*, 2006, mixed mediums, 17 1/2 by 14 3/8 by 8 1/4 inches; at Tanya Bonakdar.



preserving various modern-day mementos. His assorted oddities serve, like Proust's madeleine, as triggers for the recollection—doubtless heavily fictionalized—of past loves, early political stirrings, exotic travels and now inexplicable obsessions.

Among the flotsam and jetsam shown at Bonakdar were a bit of bone from a supermarket chicken, a nonworking Christmas light and a pencil recovered from a beach in Tasmania; each was accompanied by a little narrative, printed on a wall label, attesting to its significance for the artist. All are ensconced in elaborate shrines, which themselves appear to be found objects and refer to a wide range of spiritual practices, including Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and the Polynesian Tiki. Some of the relics are very personal, for instance a bloody scrap of a blanket that was diverted from its intended purpose as a performance artifact when the car in which Vallance was traveling was involved in a fatal accident. It is displayed in a small, white cryptlike reliquary. Other works will stir many viewers of a certain age. Nixon had a privileged place in this exhibition, represented by such artifacts as a piece of gum in the form of his profile, purportedly spit out in 1972 by a traveler in what was then East Germany; a bit of soil from Nixon's gravesite; and a political button procured by a young Jeffrey Vallance from the great man himself at a Nixon-for-governor rally in 1962.

Also included was a small bust of Lenin surrounded by Soviet-era badges and medals, a set of kitschy Vatican souvenirs blessed by the Pope and a small shrine

encircling a bubblegum card with a picture of Carolyn Jones as Morticia Addams, whom the pre-adolescent Vallance adopted as his exemplar of female beauty. Most imposing was *The Brown Wall*, which is exactly that: a piece of wall lifted from the artist's home, whose painted wood paneling is the backdrop for a collection of predominantly brown travel keepsakes from around the world.

Beneath the humor here was an underlying air of pathos, as objects with no intrinsic value or interest were redeemed by our attention. Vallance, who has worked before at the nexus of religion and popular culture, reminds us that the great spiritual traditions award a special place to the lost, the overlooked and the almost forgotten.

—Eleanor Heartney

JEFFREY VALLANCE

TANYA BONAKDAR

The glorification of remains, whether of human or inanimate origin, is a venerable religious practice. In "Relics and Reliquaries," Jeffrey Vallance presented a sometimes tongue-in-cheek, sometimes sobering take on the tradition, exalting and