Francis Upritchard: *Wetwang Slack* at the Barbican is a wry commentary on our fetishisation of historical objects.

**Steve Dinneen**
28 September 2018 6:28pm

RECOMMENDED

Bringing together dozens of multi-disciplinary works by New Zealander Francis Upritchard, *Wetwang Slack* is a wry commentary on our curation – and fetishisation – of historical objects. His delicate, slightly grotesque sculptures are presented as if they were museum pieces, perched upon plinths or lining glass cabinets.

There’s a David Shrigley-esque absurdity to the pieces, which revel in their exaggerated, misshapen forms. One cabinet is filled with strange hats, another with opaque clay glasses with smiley faces on them. Elsewhere are rows of faux neolithic jewellery and severed fingers.

A series of sculptures of little people and little gods represent cultures from around the world; South American, Indian, East Asian. There’s an implicit criticism of the way Western institutions horde these items, removing them from context and displaying them as curiosities. But it’s a light-hearted criticism, occupying that same space as Shrigley, both a critique of and a part of the artistic establishment.

Never taking itself too seriously – as an exhibition called Wetwang Slack probably shouldn’t – this is a great addendum to a visit to the Barbican, if perhaps not quite worth a visit across town on its own merit.