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Creating Friction and Changing Rhythms: Francesca Fuchs at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas and Inman Gallery

by [Sarah Ridley](#) February 25, 2022



“Francesca Fuchs, “Painted Rock (yellow/green),” 2021. Photo: Paul Hester.

At the beginning of 2022, while Francesca Fuchs had two shows open in Texas — *Serious and Slightly Funny Things* at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas, and *how a rock is all about surface* at Inman Gallery — she reflected to me on the evolution of her approach to installing shows, pairing paintings and sculptures, and adjusting to the pandemic.

Sarah Ridley (SR): When I attended the opening night of *Serious and Slightly Funny Things* back in December 2021 at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas (AMSET), you spoke and said that you wanted viewers to feel enfolded. Can you elaborate on what you meant?

Francesca Fuchs (FF): At the Art Museum of Southeast Texas, there are many moments where I paint on the walls behind or underneath paintings. For me, a starting point was to think about the

space. The Art Museum of Southeast Texas has such a particular floor. It is made up of one-by-one ceramic brown-purplish tiles. I wanted to include and enfold the physical space into this show. *Serious and Slightly Funny Things* is a snowball that is enfolded more and more things. The show contains paintings that were part of my solo show *Sculptures* at Filet in London, as well as paintings and objects from *Painting and Mugs* at Talley Dunn Gallery in Dallas.



Francesca Fuchs, "Mugs and Vases," 2016-2020.
Photo: Paul Hester

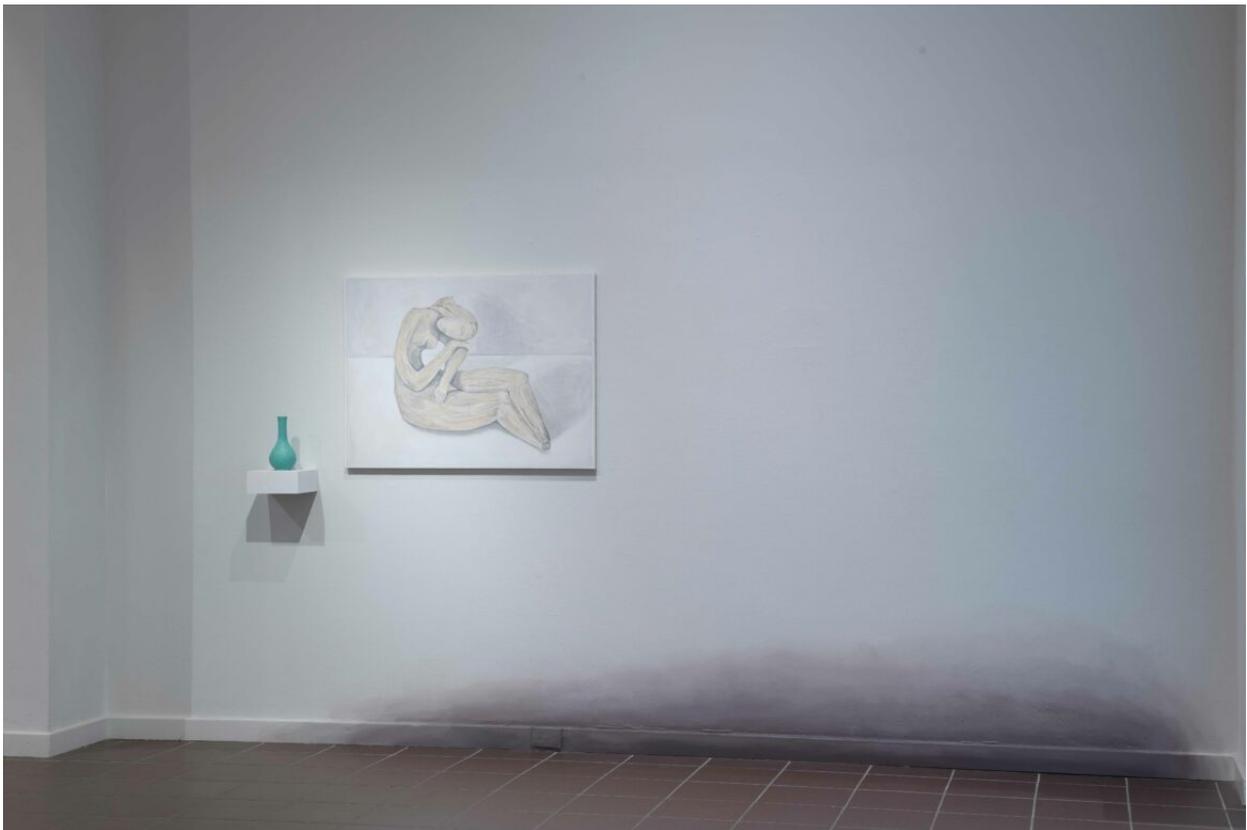
My practice keeps growing around this idea of thinking about very personal objects. I am interested in how I can rub different things against each other and how they create friction and interest. At Talley Dunn Gallery in *Painting and Mugs*, I brought in mugs that I'd been working on for the last four years and set them next to the paintings. I also painted very subtly on the walls behind two paintings — so subtly that almost no one noticed it — and I arranged the paintings and sculptures into groupings. For *Serious and Slightly Funny Things*, I wanted to expand on these choices, and the floor was one great way of extending the space and enfolded the viewer. I also wanted to extend the paintings into the world with a little bit of color, so viewers can ask themselves, "Is this part of the show?"

SR: In addition to *Serious and Slightly Funny Things* at AMSET, you currently have a show at Inman Gallery in Dallas. How are the shows different?

FF: The pieces at Inman were made with the AMSET show in mind. Indeed, at one point in November, I needed to make a clear decision of what was going into which show and then develop them separately. *how a rock is all about surface* at Inman definitely departs from the same premise as *Serious and Slightly Funny Things*, but the gallery is a much smaller enclosed space. At AMSET, we're looking at this big space with three deep bays, divided with columns on both sides, and so you can play with the idea of seeing things happen in that space in a different way, from afar. At Inman Gallery, I'm in a smaller enclosed gallery. You enter the space and you are immediately in it. There's very little stepping back, and you have less choice of how to enter the space.

SR: Do you bring the same concepts of enfolding and extending to *how a rock is all about surface*?

FF: Again, I play with the idea of the floor in this show. I am very interested in the idea that we start our art-looking from our body. I mean that we are positioned in a space when we look at objects, and feet are the things that anchor us to the ground. At Inman Gallery, I'm taking the painting on the wall much lower to the floor. This time I am mixing a gray color that feels connected to Inman Gallery's concrete floor, which is actually a very painterly concrete, but rather than blending the paint up, I keep the paint very low to the ground. I want to distort the space and for viewers to feel like the space is sort of warping out in different directions. The space gives us a sense of distortion.



Francesca Fuchs, "Turquoise Vase," 2016-2020, and "Reclining Woman," 2021. Photo: Paul Hester

There are actually no paintings of paintings at Inman. All the paintings depict objects. I specifically made one cup and one mug for one of each of the paintings in *how a rock is all about surface*. For *Serious and Slightly Funny Things*, I paired mugs with paintings after having made the mugs, and the pairings can change. At Inman

Gallery, I wanted a specific painting to have a certain mug. Overall though, these shows are very interconnected — two different expressions.

SR: You talked about this past year and referenced your Talley Dunn show *Paintings and Mugs in Dallas*, which was affected by the pandemic. How else has the pandemic affected you?

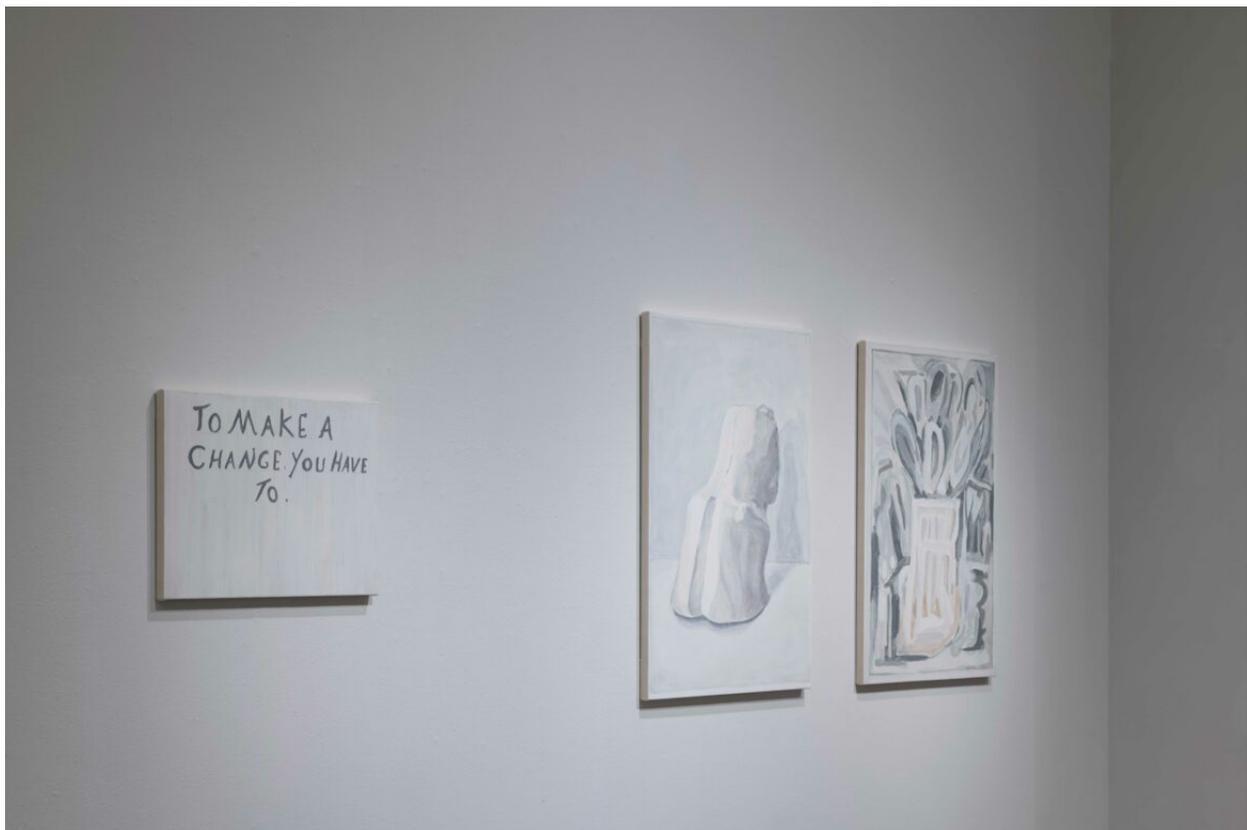
FF: The pandemic has been a way of reassessing many things. On the whole, I think I have learned a lot of patience, and I've learned that I am not in control in a very fundamental way. I know that we are always living in the illusion that we are in control; however, that illusion does not operate anymore due to the pandemic. I've gotten more comfortable with the fact that control is mostly an illusion. The pandemic has also opened up my whole perspective on perfectionism. As an artist, I want things to be a certain way, and I make sure they are that certain way: I'm sure I'm a pain in the butt to work with at different points. I always feel like my work is operating on a little tight rope or knife's edge, and if the show is not just right, my work will fall off and not work. I've had to work within this ideal perfectionism and allow for those glitches and delays. I feel like rhythms have changed because of the pandemic.



Francesca Fuchs, "Beise 3," 2020. Photo: Paul Hester.

SR: One of my favorite paintings from *Serious and Slightly Funny Things*, titled *To Make A Change* (2021), is one of the only pieces in the show that has text and minimal color. Can you talk a little bit more about this piece?

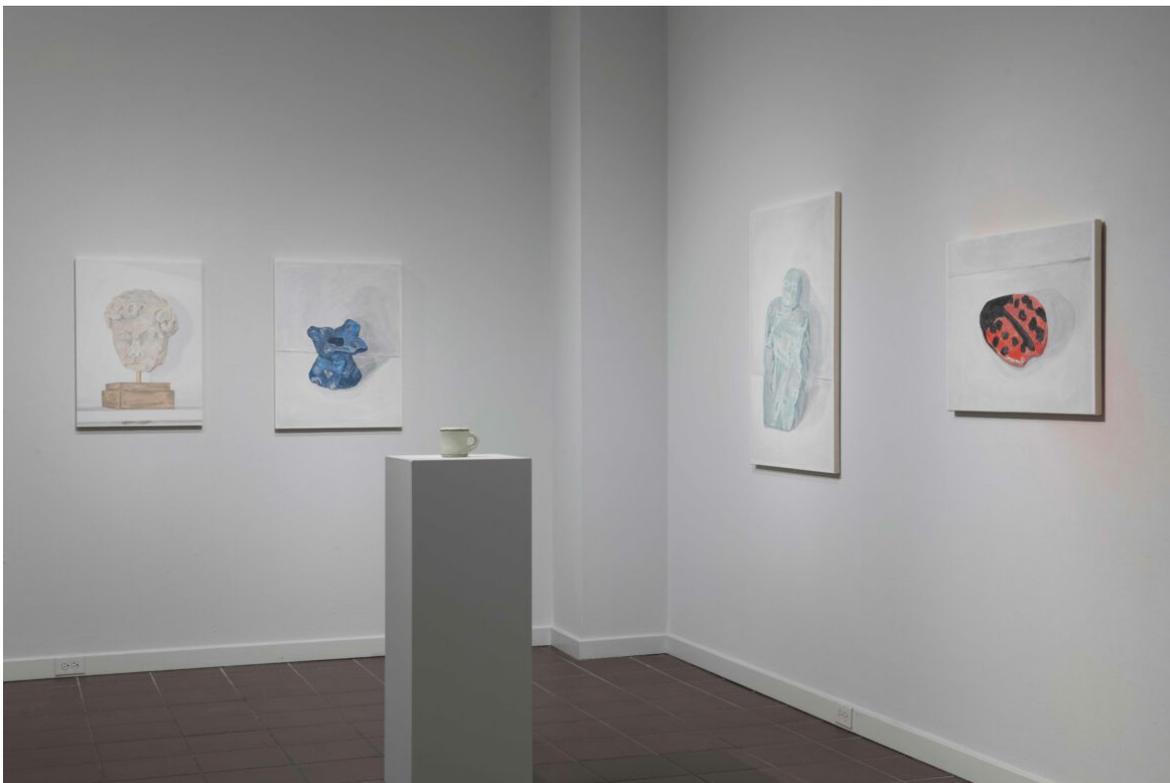
FF: I love this one. This original sign is by an artist called Finis Delaney Wesley Turner. I bought the original out of a show at Bill's Junk in Houston that was organized by Jack Massing, and I thought the signs were fabulous. Turner, or "Wet" as he was known, was a sign painter. His piece is much better than my painting of it. *To Make a Change* felt very, very poignant through the pandemic and the upheaval of the last years with the murder of George Floyd. I look at Turner's painting every day, and every day I reflect on the words: "to make a change you have to." The way the sentence stops in the middle of the board, and the thing that you need to change is left open...What is that thing that you have to do? Many of my works are about honoring and loving the thing that I am painting. By painting the object in my hands, I can juxtapose them things in a different way. I can equalize things in a way that does not quite happen if you're actually looking at the different objects in real life. It felt important to have *To Make a Change* in this show.



Francesca Fuchs, installation view of "Serious and Slightly Funny Things." Photo: Paul Hester.

SR: This idea of equalizing objects seems crucial to *Serious and Slightly Funny Things* where you have paintings of childhood art projects like *Ladybug* (2019) alongside paintings of Greek sculptures, like your 2020 piece depicting the mask of Hadrian.

FF: I want to bring all these objects into the conversation. Throughout this whole project over the last year, I've come to the realization that all of art is this confluence and influence of making. Whether the maker is a child or an adult, a trained artist or untrained artist, a well known artist or obscure artist, it makes no difference when we're looking at things. The pieces and objects influence us, so we're making work out of all of the things that we see and that takes us to the place where we want to create.



Francesca Fuchs, installation view of "Serious and Slightly Funny Things." Photo: Paul Hester.

Francesca Fuchs' show *Serious and Slightly Funny Things* is on view the [Art Museum of Southeast Texas](#) through March 22, 2022, and her show *How a Rock is All About Surface* is on view at [Inman Gallery](#) until February 26, 2022. On February 26 at 1 PM at Inman Gallery, Fuchs will be in conversation about her show with Annette Carlozzi.

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