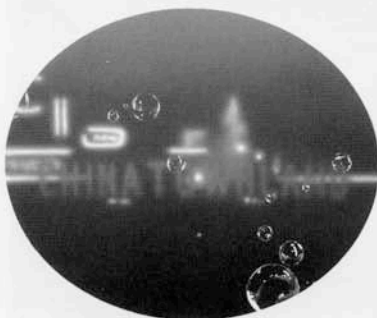


SAN ANTONIO REVIEW

Brad Tucker and Todd Hebert
Sala Diaz

Joey Fauerso

Austin-based Brad Tucker and L.A.-based Todd Hebert create work that treads lightly through the material world. In their recent Sala Diaz show, both artists combine images and materials from diverse yet often familiar landscapes, creating carefully cobbled work that explores the collisions and intersections between personal practice and shared convention.

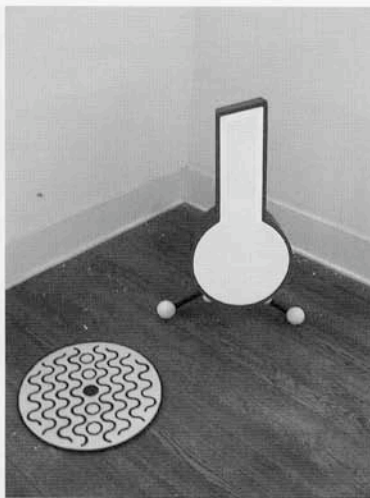


Todd Hebert, *Chinatownland*, 2003
Acrylic on canvas over panel
18 x 24 inches

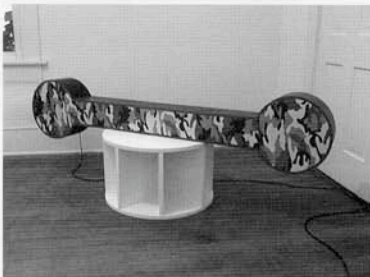
Hebert's two small paintings, *Tiny Bubbles* and *Chinatownland* depict strangely surrealistic landscapes made stranger still by variously sized soap bubbles that float across the picture plane. In *Tiny Bubbles*, an ice-blue snowman peers out from a small square canvas. The colors and forms of this wintry scene feather into one another, creating a softly focused, closely-cropped portrait of the friendly side of nature. Layered atop what looks to be an air-brushed image are delicately rendered, sharp-edged bubbles that refract the colors of a neon landscape.

The focused rendering of Hebert's bubbles, juxtaposed with the hazy snow scene, create a vast pictorial depth alluding to a landscape of much grander scale than the one depicted. The bubbles and snowman, both elusory events at the mercy of environmental conditions, are captured within the frame of the canvas. More akin to the emotional complexity of a Diane Arbus portrait than the amiable tidings of a hallmark card, Hebert strategically infuses the forces of iconic holiday schmaltz with a sense of soulful mortality. It is an eerily pleasant little painting.

Chinatownland, a slightly larger, oval-shaped canvas, depicts a neon-lit boulevard against the painted blackness of the night sky. The word *Chinatownland*, which presumably locates the image where the artist resides, can be deciphered floating in front of the street scene. Dark gray and soft-edged, the letters seem to wind around the neon signage as condensed



Brad Tucker, *Banjo and Manhole*, 2003
Acrylic on wood, lycra, tennis balls, restricted flight golf balls and modified guitar stand
Dimensions variable



Brad Tucker, *Camo-Bone*, 2003
Acrylic on wood, cotton, speaker
72 x 26 x 24 inches

humidity. Like *Tiny Bubbles*, reflective orbs float in the foreground, creating a similar sense of narrative ambiguity and pictorial depth. The realism and accuracy of *Chinatownland* is achieved through a limited number of gestural marks that conjure the landscape and reveal the artist's astute understanding of pictorial restraint and painterly illusion.

Brad Tucker—an artist, skateboarder, musician and teacher—employs the unique material intersections of his life as the basis for his sculptures, picking and choosing from the aesthetic vernacular of his varied disciplines to create a very personal language of images and symbols. Tucker's work also engages in

the layering of disparate information and materials to create oddly anthropomorphic sculptures using sound, wood, paint, fabric and sporting goods.

Asked about skateboarding and the use of skateboard imagery in some of his earlier work, Tucker was once quoted as saying, "You're not using the street or the sidewalk for its intended purpose—that is, for driving, walking or transporting yourself from one place to the next. You're using it for your own unique purpose, as a site of possibility and recreation. I include skateboards in my work as metaphors for transportation—of things and ideas." Likewise, Tucker's recent work moves outside of the utilitarian and stylistic convention to create material sites of resourceful reinvention.

In one corner of the gallery, *Camo-Bone*—a large, bone-shaped speaker form stretched with camouflage fabric, rests on a low table. The sculpture is discernibly handmade, skirting concrete representation. *Camo-Bone* summons qualities of speakers, musical instruments, musical notation, cartoonlike barbells, molecular models and the human body. Resting against the opposite wall, *Brown Circle*—a small wooden speaker skinned with brown fabric—plays spare, hauntingly melodic compositions punctuated by long periods of silence. The music has a way of animating the sculpture's minimal form; the sound surrounds the viewer and transforms the speaker's flat, circular field into an open mouth or blank, almost cartoonish face.

In another corner of the room, *Banjo and Manhole* reads as an abstracted cross between a banjo, a speaker and a musical note. The piece is accompanied by a crudely carved manhole cover of cartoonish visage—an oddly paired audience for Tucker's intermittent melodies. In this room, Tucker's carefully crafted objects are divorced from pure instrumentality. These sculptures, which orient more to the floor and to each other than the viewer, exist below the radar of spectatorship. Instead, the repeated forms and material solutions, like a rare order of creatures adapted to the personal conditions of the artist, form an elite musical trio released from the constraints of musical convention. It is the simplicity and harmony present in Tucker's work that is so refreshing, replacing utility and rhetorical reason with intuitive material solutions based on the artist's very personal and nonlinear worldly experience.

Joey Fauerso is an artist and educator based in San Antonio, Texas. She is the co-founder and co-director of the Bower, an artist-run gallery space in downtown San Antonio.