

Bill Davenport, Francesca Fuchs and Brad Tucker

IBID PROJECTS

ARTLIES

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Curated by London-based critic John Slyce (and reportedly inspired by the Byrds' song *One Hundred Years From Now*), the works by Bill Davenport, Francesca Fuchs and Brad Tucker at IBID PROJECTS combine to form a tight exhibit of light-hearted Texas-bred conceptualism. The visitor is immediately confronted by Fuchs' painting *Baby Six*, a mammoth mural that fills the wall opposite the door with the image of a mother nursing her infant in an extreme closeup. Executed in household latex—in soft shades of nursery pastels and face-powder beiges—Fuchs rendered this photo-based image using extremely simplified contours on a massive scale. The mural succeeds as a Pop commentary on motherhood and universalizes an otherwise mundane snapshot through abstraction, reduction and bleached-out color.

Less successful, however, are Fuchs' small, abstracted flower paintings, also rendered in household latex on canvas. While they are extremely similar to the imagery in "paint-it-yourself" kits sold by the Tate Gallery's gift shop, for instance, these particular paintings fail as satire, lacking the authorial commentary needed to imply a sense of irony.

Bill Davenport's mixed-media installation *Reading Takes You to Other Worlds* utilizes witty trompe l'oeil to memorialize the impact certain books have had on the artist; their paperback carcasses line a shelf below, serving as testament to the loving abuse readers often inflict on the works of their favorite authors. The first painting is the cover of a paperback edition of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* rendered on a zebra-striped, Op-Art style background; the second features *ViVa* by E. E. Cummings. Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and Charles M. Schulz' *All This And Snoopy, Too* complete the lineup.

Inspection of these paintings reveals Davenport's trompe l'oeil does not entirely fool the eye: his lettering does not mimic the perfection of machine-printed type. Backgrounds thereby appear faux-naïf, with deliberate distortions of perspective and scale. Further, paint is applied in thin, flat coats revealing that several of these canvases have been painted on several times. In some cases, more textural work peeks through, suggesting the artist may have revised his memorial selections more than a few times. The shelf of books, displayed waist-high below the paintings, contains a wide variety of genres: romance novels, classics,



Bill Davenport, *Reading Takes You to Other Worlds*, 2005  
Installation view  
Shelf of paperbacks, paintings  
(Includes Caroline Bowles, *Dinosaur*, c. 1992)

true crime and more. In all, the installation is a humorous homage to literature in general and its impact on our imagination.

Brad Tucker's modestly scaled sculptures provide a Surrealist counterpoint to the work of Fuchs and Davenport. Using simple carpentry and common materials, the artist created a series of brightly colored, wacky versions of everyday items. While most of the sculptures hang on or lean against the wall, two rest on the floor. *Reggae Revolution*—a roll of foam in alternating bands of acid green, banana yellow and hot pink—looks like a giant party whistle, the kind with a feather in its curled-up end. The foam's surface is slightly slick and shiny like saltwater taffy, making it appear homemade rather than an industrial offcut.

The other floor-bound piece, *Black Flower*, is a simple baby gate arranged in a circle and warped outward to create a convex hoop. Painted matte black, it rests akimbo on two wooden squares placed asymmetrically under one side of the circle.

Even partially lifted on these modest plinths, the piece barely stands knee-high. Though serendipitous, the relationship between this tiny warped "baby corral" and the gigantic infant in Fuchs' mural is especially amusing.

*Tandem*, a yellow wooden bicycle, leans against the wall. Tucker used wooden dowels and bits of scrap lumber to form this surreal and utterly inefficient mode of transport. The bike sports only one wheel and one pedal; its front end, missing handlebars, rests on the ground. There is no place for a would-be cyclist to perch, as upright wooden strips cover the saddle forming a pointy, uncomfortable surface. *Tandem* exhibits the same goofy sense of humor and happy-go-lucky sensibility of Tucker's other sculptures.

Ultimately, the homemade aesthetic and self-deprecating humor displayed in the work of these three Texas-based artists offer a refreshing contrast to work widely exhibited in London. Modesty in the face of the overwhelming scale and grand logistical ambitions of conceptual and installation works seen in this year's Turner Prize exhibition, for example, is a welcome respite.