

Jim Drain

I Would Gnaw on My Hand

September 7 – October 13, 2007

Greene Naftali Gallery is pleased to present the second New York solo exhibition by Jim Drain. Drain continues his merger of psychedelic formalism with a celebration of pop culture at its basest levels: amusement parks, tourist shops, 99-cent stores. By pushing these styles to their extremes, he invokes the hallucinogenic character of the international consumer world while addressing its populist affect on our shared cultural experiences.

The current exhibition presents four new large-scale sculptures, furniture works, collages, photographs, wallpaper, stained glass, and an artist-made net dividing the space. One sculpture subtly references rock icon Iggy Pop; his animalistic energy, pop clichés, and his body with its violent, angular, and grotesquely extreme movements, serve as the formal and conceptual basis for this gender-bent amalgamism of bent tube steel and metal covered in a stylish frenzy of patterned fabrics—part Frank Stella and part parade float, part corporate sculpture and part strip club decoration. Iggy appears too in a few of the collages, and a series of photographs present cut-out images of his old clothes, further elaborating Drain's investigation of the possibilities for meaning amidst the tawdry realm of discarded fashion and personal adornment.

The cross-dressed formalism in the works unites personal histories with a longer generic one as Drain continues a collaborative process in which he sources vintage fabrics, cheap child-like textiles and even throws in objects of his own—old sneakers and a Levi's handkerchief from the 1984 Olympics in the sculpture "Vagabond," a shirt in "Scribble." An aluminum cutout is made from his childhood shadow silhouette in which his teacher had written, "Jim should feel good about himself because he's a hard-working student, big and a good runner, nice to everyone and a super artist." Drain continues to create his own textile patterns and works with a group of local artists from Miami and Providence, along with family members, to create his over-the-top craft-inflected sculptures.

The sculptures themselves are highly anthropomorphic, covered in plush cloth rings and hanging fabric appendages, and overloaded with brightly colored competing prints and flamboyant patterns. These "bodies" appear decorated in every way imaginable, far beyond the "sensible" and thus short-circuiting the inherent cultural style that each fabric element would individually convey, instead coalescing into a monstrous whole.

The gallery entrance, flanked in opposing tie-dye and leopard-skin wallpaper prints, distills two polar opposites—between the novelty of social idealism and its dissolution into gaudy cultural consumption. Like the science-fiction cults that were invoked by Drain's previous art collective, Forcefield, ideas become sculptures through a hypnotic physicality. The rituals of cultural idolatry inscribe and shape the work, from the single-word mantras of the sculptures' titles to their dopey posturing and a "guaranteed o.d." (to reference Iggy one last time) of personal and cultural reflection.

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