

ARTLOG

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Either/And
by Matt Fisher



Fabienne Lasserre, *For The Partner* (installation view), 2011.
Courtesy Jeff Bailey Gallery.

Fabienne Lasserre's elliptical sculptures, which mix high-minded concepts with a scruffy process, attain a fairly uncommon balance: they are serious but not stuffy, intuitive while being systematic, and referential without being appropriative. Overall they suggest a pretty nice way of being in the world – relaxed, curious, earnest, and good-natured.

Her writings refer to in-between-ness and otherness, and are often couched in the funky, post-sexual science fiction of writers such as Ursula K. Le Guin and Samuel R. Delany. The title of her show, *For the Partner*, recently on view at Jeff Bailey Gallery in Chelsea, refers to Le Guin's novel *The Dispossessed*, in which some of the characters speak in a grammar that omits possessive pronouns such as "my" or "your." Lasserre extends this metaphor with her work to include bodies that gently evade categories such as male/female or interior/exterior.

Lasserre describes nearly all of the sculptures as creatures, which are defined by protuberances, bricolage, cartoon colors, and various bodily tensions: leaning, carrying, reaching, and so on. *Becomer*, for example, comprises a long elbow-like tube of colored and painted felt, joisted by a multicolored nib made from papier mache'd linen. *Happen* and *With a View to Entertainment* both make suggestive reference to sleeved appendages that act at once as leg, arm, and body. *Pure It*, a mostly monochrome, wall-mounted mound, could suggest belly, breast, bump on the head, or maybe all three.

In some ways, these sculptures address identity directly, whether gendered or otherwise, but it's probably equally accurate to feel an indeterminacy about identity in these works; a playful sense of obliqueness, a comment of "either/and," runs throughout the show.

Speaking with Lasserre, she described the importance of a balanced, textural tension in these works. For Lasserre, "texture" includes procedural improvisation, a dialog between composition and materials, and an intuitive sense of color and proportion. She repeatedly described a motive to make things "not too perfect," or "not too fussy." She works on multiple pieces at a time, sometimes letting a sculpture percolate for years before the "Aha!" moment when it finally reaches the right balance.

Although the overall impression is of a loosely intuitive practice, there are also signs of a methodical inquiry into particulars of language and materiality. Favored components recur, acting as linguistic markers in an evolving set of statements and queries posed by figures in the show. Handmade felt, created and dyed during stays in Oaxaca, makes an appearance in most of these figures, sometimes as raiment, sometimes as flesh. Linens brightly dyed in cartoon colors and pasted papier-mache-style over wire or metal armatures, are marks resembling brushstrokes, usually composed to offset the rigidity of scrounged industrial materials.

Other color choices might have made some of these works seem morose or abject. But, you can't help but sense and assert the inherent good humor of these works. If they are creatures, they are flawed companions more than misapprehended strangers.