

Proust to Ezra Pound—the “surplusage” of decorative language diminishes meaning. Pater’s rules are passionately flouted by Roussel, whose nearly nonsensical ekphrastic delays, or stoppages, produce exciting excursions into speculative artistic and scientific practice.

Buchholz helpfully parsed Roussel’s relationship to Proust by means of the inclusion of two editions of Proust’s prose-poem collection *Les plaisirs et les jours* (Pleasures and Days), published in 1896, the year before the appearance of Roussel’s first novel-in-verse, *La doublure* (The Understudy). Even more startling and immediate were enlargements of a series of Roussel family snapshots, some taken by Raymond, including a close-up of Madame Roussel and a pet dog with eyes that appear to be made of glass. Here we glimpsed a largely unknown corner of the archive.

Yet far more space in this modest gallery was devoted to the better-known reception history: Roussel’s influence on artists from Marcel Duchamp (who attended a performance of *Impressions of Africa*) to Joseph Cornell to Marcel Broodthaers; his connection to Surrealism; the American poet John Ashbery’s oft-cited importation of Roussel’s work into American English; Michel Foucault’s early monograph. Such diverse adulation for the show’s subject was reassuring, but the sheer quantity of materials that were included in the exhibition, along with recent works by Cameron Rowland and Henrik Olesen, among others, felt a bit like a missed opportunity. Though for Roussel more was always more, he always advanced via carefully designed procedures. More and more we want narrative and arrangement, space to think about the overwhelming amounts of information we receive; it might have been nice to consider the ways in which Roussel’s miraculous inventions anticipated this desire.

—Lucy Ives

Justin Adian

SKARSTEDT

Justin Adian’s show “Fort Worth” presented sixteen works that were made using a technique he has employed since 2007, and that has come to be his signature and calling card: The artist places hunks of foam on shaped wooden stretchers, stretches canvas over the foam, and applies oil enamel paint to the canvas surface. The results—puffy, shiny, asymmetrical—have a crisp, graphic appeal. They stand out from the wall with pleasing aplomb, like pop-surrealist upholstery, or comics come to life.

They are also possessed of a zany, cartoonlike expressivity; Adian can coax quite a bit of energy from relatively simple means. His cushions are best at capturing a sense of weight and mass: All but one work here consisted of at least two separately wrapped foam pieces pressed against one another, and there is something expressly relatable, even satisfying, about the way the pieces smooch together. This sense is strongest when the pieces don’t meet each other perfectly. In *Outfeel* (all works 2015), for example, the folds of the canvas bring to mind

buttocks seated uncomfortably in a chair. Likewise, in *Slow Goodbye*, where a light-blue shape awkwardly presses up against a curved section of pink, the site of contact, of pressure, is palpable—it can be felt.

Unsurprisingly, the works have plenty of erotic undertones. The angular yellow form of *Playback* could be a necktie or a tongue, and the seam wending its way up the torso-like *Zipt* is certainly suggestive as well. Some works, such as the hokily landscape-like *Storm Front*, adhere too closely to the pictorial, yet *Zipt* is an exception, flaunting its contours like curves through a skintight dress. Adian does little to stave off abjection: Although the bright colors and anarchic shapes of his work may fill us with feelings of fun and cheer, the scrunched-enamel medium is sickly sweet; in the folds and seams, bacteria might teem.

Adian’s materials and palette bring to mind artists such as Claes Oldenburg and Ellsworth Kelly, and no doubt his work appeals in part owing to the way it comes prepackaged with the unmistakable “look” of postwar art. Indeed, in much the same way that certain contemporary-painting practices are said to yield zombified simulacra of high-modernist formalism, Adian might be charged with plundering what came next: the shaped canvases and “specific objects” of the 1960s. Is it painting or is it sculpture? That such a question could be unanswerable was once a really big deal; quite incredibly, in 2015, it still gets invoked in reference to Adian’s work.

Which is fine: An object need only be interesting, and Adian’s work doesn’t require the aura of long-bygone provocations to sustain its charge. In fact, if he evokes the ‘60s, perhaps the proper antecedent is not Kelly et al., but the loosely defined category of “Pop abstraction,” which includes figures such as Raymond Hendler and Nicholas Krushenick (and, later, Jonathan Lasker), who sublimated AbEx viscerality in the cartoonish graphic shorthand of mass culture. (The figurative grotesqueries of the Hairy Who seem relevant as well.) Resurrected here, the style feels contemporary enough: Adian’s plump, priapic part-objects may invoke the body, but it’s one that’s wrapped in synthetic fabric and bulging at the seams, a body designed only to consume and be consumed.

—Lloyd Wise

Rita McBride

ALEXANDER AND BONIN

Rita McBride’s recent exhibition “Access” displayed a number of new sculptures in the shape of keys, keyholes, knockers, and locks, as well as a variety of large metal sheets out of which at least some of the works in the show had been cut. McBride individually designed each work on a computer and then sent her drawings out to a shop where they were sliced out of a variety of metals. The surprise is that the results do not betray the somewhat high-tech process by which these works were made. Rather, they look crude and basic, almost handmade and certainly aged, their various edges displaying inconsistencies and aberrations. This effect is due in large part to the fact that McBride patinated her objects much as a forger would age a coin, applying chemicals and treatments so as to transform them into real fakes, things both weighty and brittle, inelegant with sharp edges. For all their folkish associations, however, there was something slightly off about these works—shifted out of scale, they hovered somewhere between actual objects and their flattened silhouettes. Various hung alone, as well as in collections, they felt familiar and decorative, like things brought together through obsession rather than curatorial cleverness.

There might be a precedent to McBride’s work in some of Allan McCollum’s endless series of sculptures, but her pieces resonated in

Justin Adian, *Slow Goodbye*, 2015, oil enamel on canvas on ester foam, 24 ½ x 25 ½ x 4 ½”.

