

Timothy Taylor Gallery

Ventriloquist

27 February – 28 March 2009

Monika Baer - Daniel Baker - Suse Bauer - Tjorg Douglas Beer - Steve Bishop
Marcus Coates - Lucy Coggle - Marcel Duchamp - Armen Eloyan - Philip Guston
Charlie Hammond - Volker Hueller - Jasper Johns - Pil and Galia Kollektiv - Fiona Mackay Gorka Mohamed -
Daniel Pasteiner - Mark Pearson - Mai-Thu Perret - Francis Picabia
Pablo Picasso - Fiona Rae - Robert Rauschenberg - Colin Self - Alan Stanners
Jack Strange - Walter Swennen - Wawrzyniec Tokarski - Jens Ullrich

Timothy Taylor Gallery is delighted to present *Ventriloquist*, a group show that links works by some of the 20th century's greatest artists with those of a younger generation of established and emerging talent.

Ventriloquism – the act of stagecraft by which the performer manipulates his or her own voice so that it appears to come from elsewhere, is also described as the ability to "throw" one's own voice. However, the term "throwing one's voice" is misleading - implying that a sound's physical origin has changed, when really the change has been perceptual and not physical. Taking its title from a work by Jasper Johns included in the exhibition, *Ventriloquist* explores how artists use 'distancing' techniques to mask the author, employ ciphers and symbols and create alter-egos, fantastical self portraits, animal surrogates or even new hypothetical realms. It also explores the use of text and language which, through the influence of Freud, Dada and Surrealism, opened the door to wordplay and games, multiple meanings and associations.

In Jasper John's *Untitled (Ventriloquist)*, 1984, the artist uses the voices of others to conjure up an enigmatic and alternative vision of Americanness: the painting juxtaposes the outline of Herman Melville's 'Moby Dick' (channelled through an engraving by Barry Moser) with the work of the eccentric 19th century Biloxi potter George Ohr, an iconic American figure, who was hailed mid 20th century as a harbinger of abstraction.

Challenging art rules and upsetting bourgeois sensibilities, Dada and Surrealism introduced word games and double-entendres to the realm of art. In Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q. Shaved*, 1965, the artist reworked his famous moustache-sporting Mona Lisa by creating another version, this time without the facial hair – thereby creating the ultimate ready-made/ appropriationist artwork. The title *L.H.O.O.Q.* is a phonetic game: when read quickly in French, it sounds like a sentence that roughly translates as 'she has a hot ass'.

Francis Picabia's *Untitled*, 1948–50, reveals the influence upon the artist of Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*, in which the German philosopher extols in poetry and prose the legacy of the Provençal troubadour tradition and its joyful affirmation of life. Ferociously unconventional throughout his life and a key participant in Dada's anti-art stance, Picabia, at the end of his career, returned to graphic abstraction to explore the nature of life and art, fear, joy and love; strong lines and earthy colour and imagery combine in this primitive and phallic head, strongly reminiscent of pre-Cycladic and Iberian fertility imagery. The exhibition also features Philip Guston's late figurative work *Inside Outside*, 1977. Guston employs his personal symbolic language to create his trademark lugubrious and claustrophobic world; bugs, boots, bottles and trash-cans all combine to create a stark existential meditation.

In addition, the exhibition includes *Mr Foxy*, 2008, an endearing anthropomorphic portrait by the Armenian painter Armen Eloyan, a video by Marcus Coates exploring the thin line between the human and animal worlds and Monica Baer's disintegrating and dissolving money paintings. Misleading and erroneous self-portraits are provided by Charlie Hammond, Jack Strange, Fiona Mackay and Volker Hueller, while Suse Bauer presents a symbolic portrait of Anne Frank. Text plays an important role in laying false trails, with diaristic extracts from Mai-Thu Perret's meta-narrative *The Crystal Frontier*, and Daniel Baker's mirrored texts and Lucy Coggles' nonsense spreading ambiguity and confusion. An early Fiona Rae painting suggests an imaginary pictogram language, while Wawrzyniec Tokarski and Mark Pearson both use strongly associative graphics and text to question traditional power structures.

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