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- events
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Drew Beattie

Hansel und Gretel Picture Garden



Drew Beattie, *Family*, 2011, courtesy Hansel und Gretel Picture Garden

Although primarily known as a painter from his ten-year collaboration with Daniel Davidson from 1989 to 1998, some of the strongest pieces in Drew Beattie's solo exhibition of works from 1990 to 2012 titled "My Cookie" are recent sculptures featuring inexpensive and found materials. Still, "My Cookie" also includes many surreal drawings and two large works on paper from Beattie and Davidson that link his current practice with this fertile period in his career.

For the most part, Beattie's conglomeration of sculptural objects are placed casually around Hansel und Gretel Picture Garden, and while a connection to the work of Rachel Harrison could be made, these even-more offhand arrangements, perhaps in part due to their relatively small scale, are unlike most art you'll see in Chelsea these days; for example, Damien Hirst's bombastic exhibition "The Complete Spot Paintings 1986-2011" is just a few blocks away. Beattie's work could have easily been included in the New Museum's "Unmonumental" exhibition in 2007, which canonized the recent tidal wave of visual mashups and Art Povera-style sculpture. The only difference is that this style currently dominates many youngish artists' practices, while Beattie has been developing his unique aesthetic since the 1970s.

Many of Beattie's current works look like objects culled from the blog "Crap at My Parents' House," including *Family* (2011), with its blow-up Bozo the Clown figurine resting on the bottom of a piece of molded Styrofoam propped-open by a painted ceramic blob, and other assorted oddities, including a large wadded-up photograph of a face that looks like it was ripped from a subway ad or billboard. A similar photo-sculptural hybrid appears in *Jessica's Speaker* (2012), with a crumpled photographic face of a woman covered in what appears to be clear acrylic medium draped on a metal speaker stand. Two works jockey for position in a small nook at the entrance to the gallery: *Screamer* (2011), a colorful stack of spray paint can lids with a napkin-size wad of paper on top, towers over *JEJ* (2011), a piece of cement whose thin depth barely holds a collaged photograph of a man's face. Less subtle is *The Wanderer* (2012), a found-object elderly wizard character (think Tolkien) with a lump of Bondo plopped on his head that stands on a Styrofoam pad on the floor in the middle of the gallery.

The allure of Beattie's larger mixed-media works on canvas, such as those seen on his website would have been a welcome addition to this informal survey. To be fair, many of the two-dimensional pieces, which are mostly on paper, have the same amount of off-the-wall experimentation as the sculptures, yet the graphic quality of *Drawing no. 171 (nobody)* (2000), with its undetermined animal form and the word "nobody" outlined from a hexagonal grid, stands out from the pack and creates some sort of order from the chaos around it. Scrutinizing the nonsensical disarray, Beattie seems to be following Jasper Johns' directive: "Take an object, do something with it, and then do something else with it." Beattie makes something from nothing after a few minimal alterations: a fitting tactic in these austere times of economic uncertainty.

- Chris Bors

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