

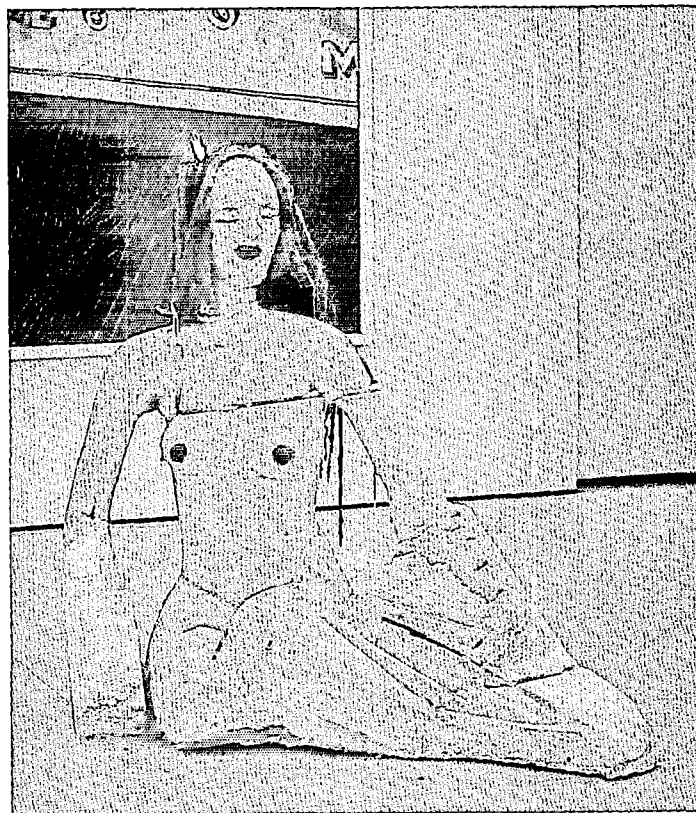
## LONDON, ENGLAND

By Kate Zarnet

URS FISCHER (*Sadie Coles HQ, January 29—March 1, 2003*) believes in the inherent life of objects. For him, the artistic process stands as a complex interplay between the imagination, the hand of the artist, and the natural order of things. "The imagination cannot force the material into the desired form," the artist explains, "My work begins with an idea, but the result is often the product of coinciding circumstances." Fischer articulates this process-related dialogue across the traditional media of painting, drawing and sculpture, using an array of appropriated materials from the organic, to everyday detritus including glass, wax, clay, wood and polystyrene.

For his exhibition at the Kunsthaus Glarus in Switzerland (2000), Fischer made a series of sculptures with various fruits and vegetables crudely fused together with screws. Over time, the subjects rotted and thus evolved into an unforeseen relation of forms and associations. Like much of Fischer's work to date, this work can be seen as a metaphor to the fragility and transient nature of life, while at the same time speaking to a purely creative progression of formal structure, born from nature and captured, however temporarily, as art.

For this, his first solo exhibition in the UK, Fischer continues such controlled experiments into chance and spontaneity with the presentation of his most conceptually polished work to date: three sculptures of near life-size women hewn from blocks of polystyrene, and then cast as solid wax candles. Throughout the exhibition, the sculpted forms will slowly disintegrate as the wax melts. I caught these at a good moment: melted wax had begun to transform limbs into stalactites and the backs of heads had dissolved into cascades of colored tendrils. Fischer thrives on such uncontrived improvisation, as he explains, "In the end, all that counts is whether the artwork takes on a life of its own. I try to create something which is itself."



Urs Fischer, red head from *What if the phone rings*, 2003, pigment, wax, wick 37 by 39 by 21 inches (photo copyright the artist; courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London).

To some extent these works may also be interpreted as performance—a discrete activity shaped by the parameters of real time. In such a context they could be seen as a playful homage to the body-referential performances of artists such as Marina Abramovic or Valie Export in the 1960s. After all, these wax figures achieve what a live performer can never do: they have the ability to transfigure into something else entirely.

The three women candles are surrounded by a series of drawings, photographs and another small sculpture by the artist. Although these pieces without doubt represent the broader body of Fischer's work, I would argue that they are a somewhat unnecessary distraction from those beguiling centerpieces, which would have commanded the space quite admirably on their own. Nonetheless, Fischer's drawings continue his exploration into deriving something concrete from the accidental, while also exploring a more humorous, populist vocabulary—

from comics and fairy stories to graffiti imagery. These are collaged with what he describes as mild images of ordinary things: padlocks, furniture, raindrops and random body parts. With their supercharged immediacy, these drawings suggest automatic doodles, where loosely rendered forms configure into imagery more by luck than judgement. At best, Fischer's drawings charmingly explore the subliminal experiences of everyday life; at worst, they can be lifeless and naive. Saying that, Fischer is the first to admit that the process interests him more than the result. A more cynical person would suggest that this is an easy way to explain away patchiness in quality, but, I'm going to go along with Fischer for the time being, and see this exhibition as a light-hearted, playful interaction with the traditional paradigms of art and the act of making.

## LONDON, ENGLAND

By David Ryan

Located in the heart of the continually developing area around Borough and Union Street in London, the Jerwood Space is a relatively new venue, but an increasingly significant showcase for emerging artists. JAIME GILI (*January 15—February 9, 2003*), a young Venezuelan artist based in London since his studies at the Royal College of Art, has participated in the first of the Jerwood Artist Platforms—an opportunity for a major London solo exhibition at a pivotal point in an artist's career. For many it would be a mixed blessing—the architecture of the gallery space is unflattering and difficult to say the least, but Gili has risen to the challenge. On the first wall—visible from the entrance of the space—is an arrangement of photographs featuring close-ups of cars entitled *Multinational Anthem* (2002). This acts as a kind of prelude to the rest of the show, a small self-enclosed installation in which Gili lays out his subject matter almost as literal research. It encapsulates his concerns within the reality of everyday city life. Here, the relationship between speed, flow, national identity and corporate multinationalism find their focal point in the car, which in turn is viewed as a hybrid of signs. A disinterested and detached demeanour surrounds these photographs that, like a modern day flaneur—or dare one say "train spotter"—log insignias, logos, flags and designs, providing not only the charting of social and geographical networks but also a visual ebb and flow of distance and proximity.

In the next two rooms the display presents series of works collectively entitled "Rupt" (2002) and "Alma" (2002) respectively. With the exception of a large wall painting (which visually connects with the next room) and one long horizontal piece (with its associations of a field of vision, wind-screen and bumper, obliquely reminiscent of the format of photographs on the preceding wall), the "Rupt" series consists of elon-

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