

Reviews

Urs Fischer

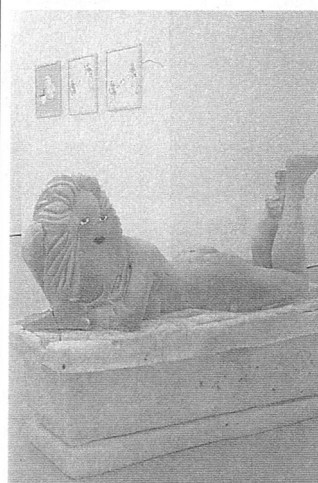
Sadie Coles HQ *West End*

Melting in the gallery are Urs Fischer's candle-sculptures. Hewn from blocks of wax, three life-sized nudes sit, kneel and lie in provocative poses. Pert nipples, painted lips and come-hither expressions add an element of cartoon sexuality that suggests a slightly hysterical, red-blooded-male idea of female perfection. The addition of candle wicks, however, transforms these kitsch 'beauties' into strange, mutilated beasts. Her 'hair' set alight, one figure bleeds waxy tendrils that spill down her torso like dark entrails. Reclining seductively on a plinth, another bears a crater in the top of her head. With a wick in each heel, she is about to lose her left foot and her right leg has been reduced to a stump. Watching the slow demise of Fischer's *femmes fatales* raises difficult questions. Is he commenting on unattainable beauty as depicted in the immaculate, marble bodies of, say, Canova's 'Three Graces'? Or maybe he is aping the sexual aggression of Picasso or poking fun at the impotence of Dali and his flaccid, melting objects. Sexual politics seem less important, though, than process and product. Once made, these sculptures evolve in unforeseen ways by the artist. And, as a commodity, each comes with a sting in its tail; in order to complete the work one would need to destroy it, thus rendering it worthless.

In drawings, Fischer displays a more straightforward attitude towards creation. Doodles are tweaked to become a keyhole in a brick wall through which an escaping limb is visible; a pair of eyes are set into a door and a face has its mouth substituted by an anus. Displaying these surrealist clichés in quirky, handmade frames, Fischer offers a homespun aesthetic that, while charming, is far more predictable and, probably, more saleable.

Martin Coomer

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