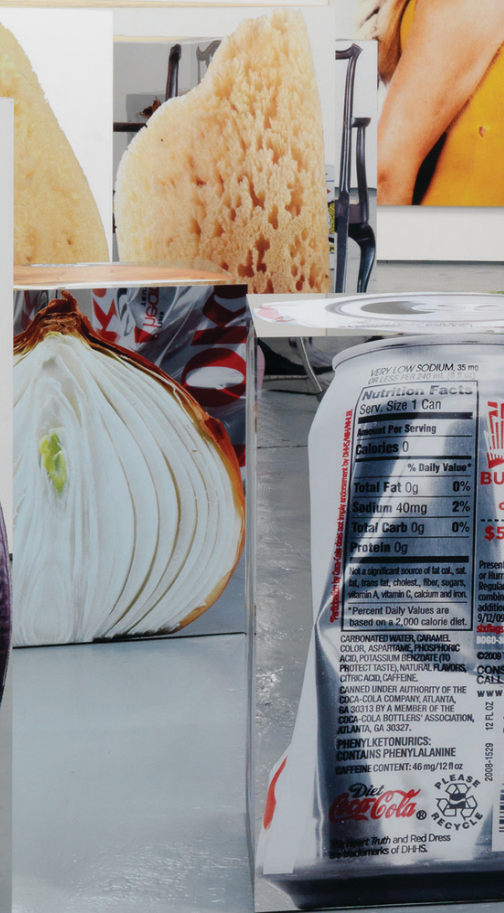


URS FISCHER

Sadie Coles | New Burlington Place, London





→ **SADIE COLES OPENED** her new, additional space in London's West End with an Urs Fischer installation named "Douglas Sirk" (through December 11), mainly a collection of mirrored cubes silk-screened with images of miscellaneous objects. The multifaceted Swiss artist is best known for blowing holes in white cubes, as so many gibes or digs that reveal unforeseen perspectives or forms of beauty. Fischer's work is the typical late-century meld of influences, combining an interest in throwing things together to see what happens with a somewhat childish ambition to bite the hand that feeds him.

URS FISCHER (ABOVE & OVER), "DOUGLAS SIRK," INSTALLATION VIEWS, SADIE COLES,

4 NEW BURLINGTON PLACE, LONDON W1, OCTOBER 6 - DECEMBER 11, 2010.

PHOTO STEFAN ALTENBURGER. © URS FISCHER. COURTESY SADIE COLES HQ, LONDON.



Yet far from mocking the new space, “Douglas Sirk” seemed set on a more flattering imitation of life. Over 30 large, variously sized mirrored cubes and rectangular forms reflected the surroundings and each other, duplicating and intensifying everything. Most cubes have photographic transfers on all four sides and top, resulting in a dizzying to-and-fro between object and image. The larger-than-life depictions fill their containers, mostly grouped in double pairs, to the brim, affording such odd conjunctions as fox masks and chairs, playing cards and nuts and bolts, shopping carts and ducklings (which from certain angles turned into a brood of them). If there were links between the cubed subjects, either within the groupings or overall, these were matters for serendipitous discovery in transit. They certainly didn’t feel purposely imposed.

Plenty of recent installation work plays with scale or space, the ambiguities between two and three dimensions, and doubling or seriality. “Douglas Sirk” ticked all of these off the list, whilst also orchestrating a collision between kitsch sensibilities and geometric minimalism. You could indeed identify many of the same games in Fischer’s numerous references to other artists: most obviously, Koons’s high-finish fetishes, Oldenburg’s scaling up of the everyday, Robert

Morris’s mirrored cubes, and Pistoletto’s confusing mirror images. On the other hand, you could think in terms of genre: still life painting, loaded fruit in *vanitas* mode, or fashion photography. The sheer pileup of themes and insinuations was impressive.

Less obvious perhaps is the possible reference to another artist, a painter who has also used still life elements to create paintings that can be read as cityscapes, but who is more concerned with the spaces and relations between objects than the objects themselves. Could it be that Giorgio Morandi, who once said of his bottle arrangements that “nothing is more abstract than reality,” finds a fitting home in Fischer’s remark, apropos a comparable installation, that “the mirror surface is irrelevant. What’s interesting to me is the absence of the object.”

Absent presence aside, there was still plenty of room on the walls to show six large paintings from two recent series, four from *Monsters*, comprising digitally screwed-up faces of men with fruit, and two from *Star Lights*, showing encounters between archetypal 1950s screen sirens and a giant fork or spoon. In many ways these works are the most Sirkian of the bunch, acting as a cue to the larger (Platonic) idea of life as mirror image, as vanity of vanities. The Sadie Coles show certainly captures the right nuance of melodrama. But does it reflect Sirk’s critique of social conformity, or is it only idle banter?

~Paul Carey-Kent

URS FISCHER (LEFT TO RIGHT), *ESOTERIC FUN & ESTRUSCAN PAELLA*, BOTH 2010, SURFACE: GESSO, ACRYLIC INK, SILK-SCREENED ACRYLIC PAINT, ACRYLIC POLYMER CLEAR COAT BACKING: CEDAR, MDF, POLYURETHANE GLUE

