

Daniel Davidson

at Jessica Murray Projects

reviewed by Jennifer Coates

Doodling is an absent-minded practice done while performing other tasks like talking on the phone or sitting in a class. It is usually silly, aimless and unconscious. The doodle as a pictorial style or generative practice has been slowly co-opted by fine artists over the years. Fine art doodles are often confessional: a diaristic transmittal of mutant secrets or a demonstration of obsessive-compulsive behavior. Diana Cooper's maze-like, repetitive lines in ballpoint, Marcel Dzama's storybook renderings of dastardly scenarios and Daniel Davidson's drawings of insincere messages and worst-case-scenario self portraits are points along this continuum of chatty psychological revelation.

In a recent show of works on paper at Jessica Murray Projects, entitled *Test Kit*, Davidson concocted an engaging axis of dread, around which a fear of death, a bad self image and fake hand-written notes rotated.

In *Cheese Board*, an acrylic painting on paper, a swiped lavender haze formed the background for a sinister tableau of acid yellow cheese, blue crackers and a purple dagger stuck into a seafoam green cutting board. On the dagger was a carefully rendered post-it with the message "A-U call me!" and a smiley face. The romantic color field was undercut by a chirpy cartoon still life, which was interrupted by aggressive violence, which was in turn deflected by insincerity. In two companion drawings, both in ballpoint and marker on rice paper, there were portraits of the artist as bloated, elongated, shiftless shithheads dressed in fashionable duds. In *Self Portrait (Santa Cruz)* his shirt was open, his feet were bare and he jammed an impossibly huge sandwich down his throat. In *Self Portrait (Miami)* he sported a Hawaiian shirt, groovy blue pants, and flip flops with one foot inexplicably bandaged. In each piece there was some kind of betrayal: with every pictorial decision Davidson made, he spoke to the one that came before and poked fun of it.

Davidson's interest in self-canceling paranoia leads him on meandering journeys through pictorial styles, socially constructed personas and formalized verbal communication. If phrases like "call me!" and "I'm sorry!" stink of comically avoidant duplicity when written in the wrong context, then perhaps cartoons superimposed on abstract-expressionist fields, or hungry, wounded, XXL men wearing hipster clothes are like productive lies, where one layer illuminates the other, rendering the entire unit more complex, more entertaining and more lovable.

Test Kit, Daniel Davidson's show, is on view at Jessica Murray Projects (along with Brady Dollarhide *I'm Only Now*) from September 20 until November 3. The gallery is located at 210 N 6th Street and can be reached at (718) 384-9606.

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