

Ry Haskings **MAGNOLIA CABOOSE BABYFINGER**

Ocular Lab / October 11 – 26, 2008.

Camera, Action, Haskings

I first met Ry at an art opening when I moved to Melbourne in 2002. At the time he was playing bass in the pub rock outfit *Teenwolf*. After about a year I think I begged for/ was asked to introduce the band live on stage – ‘Tommy’ Thunder, Masato ‘The Dragon’ Takasaka, Ry ‘Action’ Haskings, Si ‘The Philanthropist’. They sounded a bit like a KISS cover band but without the makeup and meaner if you closed your eyes without falling over from all the beer you drank while they chugged through their rocky booty call set. A real hoot. At the time Ry was making LA gang-styled works of art revolving around graffiti and music culture - knives, cassettes and chains, ya’ll.

Mr. Arm

The title for Ry’s show at Ocular Lab is *Magnolia Caboose Babyfinger*. It’s also a title from a song by a psych-rock band called Blue Cheer, from an album titled *Outsideinside*, released forty years ago. The song is fast paced, Hendrix era live riffs like a jam but a rehearsed sounding jam – it’s loose and garagey and predates recording debuts by the Stooges and MC5. Bands like the Melvins and Smashing Pumpkins have covered songs by Blue Cheer either live or on recordings and Mudhoney do a version of *Magnolia Caboose Baby Finger* on their first album but they title it *Magnolia Caboose Baby Shit*. It was 1989.

Ride it crooked

Ry has recently done a series of works using completed Sudoku puzzles as the basis for abstract compositions. Each number is assigned with a colour then the whole map of gridded colours gets twisted and bent in space to become a modern looking mobile. Sometimes things like a capsicum or an overhead projector accompany the mobile on the page, almost as though they cameo in an advert for found objects and the crumpled checkerboard is used as a cape for the object to transcend it’s surrounds riding a stiff multicoloured carpet. Formulaic without form.

One Grease

The works on paper in this show remind me immediately of Juan Gris reproductions. Gris became like the third musketeer of Cubism, before which he submitted satirical drawings to journals and newspapers like *Le Rire*, and was buddies with the likes of Modigliani and Leger. But unlike Picasso and Braque, whose cubist works were monochromatic, Gris painted with bright colours. A Synthetic cubist with a sense of humor. The works Ry has produced feel unfinished but in a progressive way, like the things left out are the things that are most important to their discovery.

And the Bird

A lot of Ry’s works in the past have given the viewer an ‘up yours’ – in wood, blu tac, on a cordless drill. I’m guessing the mask of Mace is *that* work this time. But this time the Bird seems like he’s trying to suck the life out of the show, his mouth wide open with mod haircut and specs – a framed square trying to take a gulp of hip. It’s like a work which Ry has remade a few times as a sculpture then a drawing – the abstract Rondo drip painting pierced by a vacuum cleaner hose, poised like a Kabuki actor waiting for the music to change. But the music hasn’t changed. It’s just been covered, recorded and had Shit stuck on the end where the Finger was. It might give you a few gags. It might be a beauty.

Geoff Newton
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