

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

Art Review:

Urs Fischer

Mermaid, Pig, Bro w/Hat Gagosian, 104 Delancey Street 3 April–23 May

Last Supper Gagosian, Park & 75 3 April–8 May



In Manhattan, real estate is prohibitively expensive, which is why banks inhabit so many street corners. Another sort of institution that can easily afford rental prices in New York is the mega-gallery, and more specifically, Gagosian, which in April opened a temporary space in a former Chase bank branch on Delancey Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Rather than renovating the space, the gallery chose to keep it untouched, as if the bank employees had moved out in a hurry the day before, leaving behind empty vaults, cheap office furniture and a prominently featured Chase logo hanging on the wall. All Gagosian did was add Urs Fischer: *Mermaid, Pig, Bro w/Hat*, an exhibition of 25 cast bronze sculptures, and a bevy of black security guards in cheap suits to watch over them.

Is it horrible to say that I loved it? Without the typical gallery apparatus – the ice-queen gallerinas, the sign-in book, the white walls, the stuffy attitude – I could actually see Fischer's sculptures. These works were cast from clay

sculptures made for Fischer's show *Yes* last year at the Geffen Contemporary in Los Angeles. Fischer had 1,500 participants help him make the clay sculptures, which were inspired by, among other things, *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (1574–82) by the sculptor Giambologna. The sculptures in *Yes* were crudely rendered, resembling less the work of a skilled artist than that of a thousand drunk elves. For example, *Small Girl* (all works 2014), set in the gaping hole left behind by the removal of an ATM machine, looks like an endangered waif from a Hans Christian Andersen story; whereas *Mermaid* depicts a reclining nymph on a craggy pedestal whose head is half missing, as if it had been blown off by a bomb during some long-ago war; and *Bro w/Hat*, a thick hulk of a figure, looks like the mythological twin of the shyly smiling security guard that stood by him.

None of the references in the works were specific, but each resonated as familiar, as if I had read about them in a fairytale or seen them in an art-history lecture. The show as a whole

looked as if it had been made by some future generation attempting to recreate cultural relics of the past. The sculptures were not 'good'; but they were art, and in a former corporate bank branch, I could identify them as such.

Less shocking to the senses is *Last Supper*, a related exhibition of just a single sculpture, also from *Yes*, in another new Gagosian space, on Park Avenue at 75th Street. This eponymous work, based on the New Testament scene, shows Jesus Christ (resembling the Statue of Liberty) eating a taco and drinking a Budweiser. Rather than feeling like I had walked into some sort of nonplace that doesn't exist in real time, as I did at the bank, I knew exactly where I was here: standing in an art gallery, looking at something made by the hands of some Los Angeles hipsters who volunteered for the Urs Fischer show.

Perhaps the context was at fault, not the work. My neural pathways may be wired in such a way these days that all I can feel in a white cube space is apathetic disgust. *Brienne Walsh*