

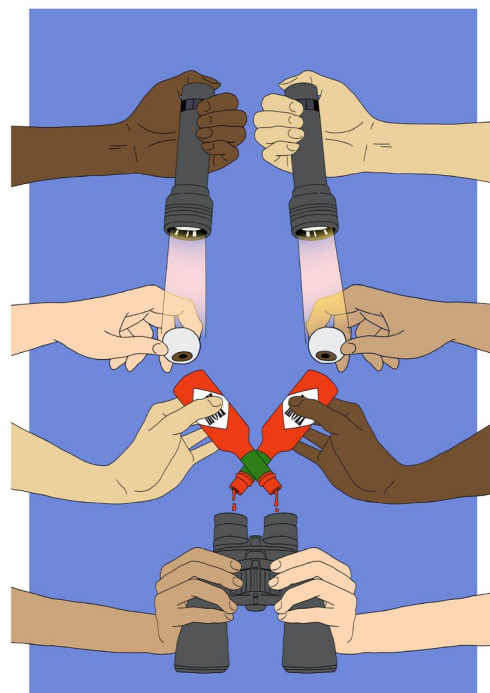
Darren Bader
Mends of Scott Friendes

8 Bury Street SW1Y
09 July – 21 August 2021

This July, Sadie Coles HQ presents *Mends of Scott Friendes*, an exhibition of new work by Darren Bader – his fourth with the gallery. Through a range of media – sculpture, Augmented Reality (AR), mural, photography and posters – the artist continues to distil and defamiliarize the concept of the ‘art object’.

Bader’s latest works annex digital technology to the categories of sculpture and assemblage. *6 Sides of Scott Mendes*, is an oak cube, echoing a gaming die, with a QR code embedded on each face. Using a smartphone (iOS only in this instance), viewers may scan a code to launch AR characters, including a human charging station and giant nail clippers on wheels. These digital sculptures can be transplanted into the user’s physical whereabouts via the screen of the smart device.

Shown in parallel, *Mundi 56* is a sculptural assemblage of a hybridised turtle topped by Ruscha-like signage promoting *Taco Tuesday*; in place of a head and tail are lengths of rope, attached respectively to a helium balloon and to a metal table (itself supporting a massive cob of corn). This immobile assemblage, infused with allusions to Pop Art and the readymade, is a proxy for an AR sculpture similar to those of the oak die. By activating a printed QR code, viewers of the static sculpture can again bring its animated form into their own surroundings, using their smartphone.



A group of two-dimensional works extend the wry non sequiturs, the absurdist logic, of Bader’s sculptures. A wall painting, C-print and poster transpose the visual and verbal allusiveness of his wider practice into a sequence of graphic ‘variations’ that paraphrase the styles of other artists. One image – rendered in a sparing, linear, ‘Pop’ idiom – could read as a parody of overdetermined interpretation, with pairs of hands holding torches, eyeballs and binoculars, but with one rogue pair of hands sprinkling hot sauce on the binocular eyepieces. The motif of twin forearms originated in Bader’s *Mendes Mundi* project, an AR spectacle conceived for the 2019 Venice Biennale, whose virtual characters were imagined to be the creations of Scott Mendes, an itinerant artist known to self-inject local pigeon excrement in pursuit of oneiric muses.

Simultaneously hermetic and participatory, elusive and arresting, Bader’s art continues to evince what the critic Bruce Hainley has called a “strange ‘unplaceability’” of genre and of media. His art’s capacity to coax verbal interpretation, while also courting accident, is encapsulated by the words appearing in *Mundial #2* – a scroll held by pairs of interlocking, winged forearms that hold forth the quote: “THE CONDITION OF NO EXIT CREEPS ON SLIPPED FEET”.

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