

*Bad Influence* presents works by Gretchen Bender, Ashley Bickerton, Wim Delvoye and Jonathan Lasker symptomatic of a certain 80s generation of artists who simulated and abstracted the visual language of consumerism to rupture traditional media circuitry. The exhibition reexamines this aesthetic strategy and questions its use by artists today.

Bender's *People in Pain* (1988) isolates film titles and presents them as backlit vinyl wall sculptures, Bickerton's *Seascape: Floating Costume to Drift for Eternity III (Elvis Suit)* (1992) frames an Elvis style jump-suit in a futuristic waterproof container, and Delvoye's *Tecno Pro TPS Esprit SL 41-8 Yellow* (1989) takes a high tech carbon fibre tennis racket and replaces the strings with a stained glass image of a medieval laborer and patron. By using graphic motifs as his readymade, Lasker's painting, *To Caress the Naked Eye* (1987) literalizes the processes of abstraction utilized by Bender, Bickerton and Delvoye.

Roughly 30 years later, young artists are once again mining popular images presented by film, television, print advertisements and now, the Internet. While it's easy to make formal comparisons, it's more significant to view the 80s work as offering a proposition to be tested. The proposition challenges one to investigate the feedback loop of branding and monetization. But imported wholesale from the 80s, without acknowledging the specific features of today's distributed media environment and our role as producers in that environment, the proposition results in a disenfranchised, flaccid representation of a moment in history.

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