

Richard Telles presents a solo exhibition by Brendan Fowler, his first with the gallery, featuring a suite of new embroidered pictures, sampler-based sound works, and wooden benches. Operated by the gallery staff, the sampler is equipped to perform a group of six ever-morphing sound works composed by the artist, each one never playing the same way twice. Extending a corollary between the facture of his paintings and sound, Fowler further stakes his interest in the tension between spontaneity and control, performance and the quotidian.

Ever gleaning from the memory card of his point and shoot camera, the fount of his daily archive, Fowler prints these images onto fabrics, which are embroidered onto canvas using the line-art of common domestic patterns—often “off-registered” as the ghost of the silk-screen print. Also capable of reproducing photographs with thread, the embroidery machines under Fowler’s care continue to exploit the distinct banality of “gonzo” imagery in his new pictures. These machines are industrial-level, but whose aim Fowler has reversed: commonly used for mass-produced hats, sweatshirts, and other sportswear, to emblazon them with logos and graphics, Fowler uses the machine to create a unique ‘painterly’ object. Through its inherent technical glitches and soft material—colored thread—it renders the image tactile, not usually within the digital picture’s realm, while also making its approximate impression of photo-realist painting or the analog print.

The digital programming for the embroidery machine and the sound sampler interweave a hidden formal structure for the show as a whole. For the paintings, Fowler programs the movements of fifteen needles threaded with different colors of his choosing. As for the sampler, Fowler can play twelve samples through ten different data banks. In both machines he inputs sets of data, which are then subjected to a wide range of manipulations through choices, glitches, and physical representations. The nexus between the spontaneous (i.e. realizing the work as it’s being made through “intuition”) and the rigid control of set data schemes (the pre-designated structure) is where Fowler’s work runs amok generalized assumptions about authorship, appropriation, and personal agency. In a culture that encourages personal agency, yet represses it in a panoply of ways, Fowler subverts this with joyous abandon.

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