

SEASON 4 EPISODE 6

Do What You Can't

A Solo Exhibition by David Attwood | 18.01.26 - 14.03.26; PV: 17.01.26, 6-9 p.m.

Season 4 Episode 6

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The exhibition *Do What You Can't* presents two new series of works by David Attwood made using steel backing plates from Samsung washing machines. The exhibition marks Attwood's first solo exhibition with Season 4 Episode 6. WF756UMSAWQ is the part number of a backing plate for a particular line of Samsung front-loader washing machines. The part features a smiley face that transforms an otherwise ordinary industrial design into a cheerful star-jumping figure.

The Cowan Paradox is a term used to describe the ways that household labour-saving technologies have failed to decrease domestic workloads. In her book 'More Work From Mother' sociologist Ruth Schwarz Cowan argues that emergent appliances of the 1930s designed to reduce the demands of housework, had in fact increased it. She uses laundry as a prominent example, as the home washing machine effectively individualised a maintenance task that had previously been shared collectively among family members, done by laundresses, or outsourced to commercial laundries. Other theorists credit the availability of the first home washing machines as thwarting the potential socialisation of laundry, turning what could have been a collective industrial process into the isolated work of individuals.

The smiley face was designed by artist Harvey Ball in 1963, tasked by an insurance company to improve employee morale through a disseminated logo. For theorist Sian Ngai the smiley face functions today as an icon of the capitalist economy, both in the way it is impressed on every consumer product imaginable, and the way it functions as an abstracted, reduced-down image of the dedifferentiated 'individual'.

If folk-art is largely the unpretentious, decorative embellishment of domestic utility objects, then a smiley face cast in a washing machine destined to face the wall is a kind of industrial folk. Embellishing an embellishment with nail polish is tautological, busy work.

David Attwood (b.1990 Naarm Melbourne) lives and works in Boorloo Perth, Australia. Attwood's work has recently been presented at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (2025); May Art Fair, Auckland (2025); Art-o-rama Art Fair, Marseille (2025); Moore Contemporary, Perth (2025); Kaiserwache, Freiburg (2025); FL@T\$, Cologne (2024); Gene's Dispensary, Los Angeles (2024); Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth (2024); Bill's PC, Fremantle (2024); Cellar Door, Sydney (2023); Disneyland Paris, Perth (2023); Low Gallery, Riga (2022); Lodos, Mexico City (2021); Station, Sydney (2020); Biquini Wax EPS, Mexico City (2019); and elsewhere.

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