



Liang Luscombe
Bauhaus Fisher Price

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Don't go changing.

Brooke Babington

The thing about double negatives is that you never quite end up right back where you started, yet neither is it not not the same place you began. Inversion is action through reception; a form of inaction that nevertheless yields some surfeit of meaning.

When the work is a throwback to an earlier time it is usually to illustrate the malleability of history. The time warp effect reminds us to rehearse our lessons from postmodernism: The past is a construct. History was not a straight line...

This looks like that, but it isn't that.

It has the historical cues, the rich intertextuality and the atemporal hiccups – except that the work here doesn't seem to have all that much to do with history really. Other than lifting imagery directly from the past (the chair design is Andrea Branzi for Studio Alchymia from 1980; the patterns are Memphis from a few years later) the work seems to speak more of the act of taking than of where it's taking from or why.

In an interview called "Style and Pastiche" for Parkett I, Bettina Funcke and Carol Bove seem almost accidentally to work up a convincing case for Bove's practice as rooted in pastiche. Not – in the sense we are accustomed to – as in the pastiche of an aesthetic, but rather of a strategy: a pastiche of the postmodern strategy of appropriation. Where Pop appropriated material, Postmodernism appropriated style. But what is it to appropriate appropriation itself?

Appropriation at one degree of remove is an inflection that complicates – telescopes – the stance that the artist takes toward the work and to the original.

The first time around, the wilful excess of proto postmodern design and architecture studios – Archizoom, Superstudio, Studio Alchymia, Memphis – acted as 'ironic, post-Functionalist commentaries on the Modern Movement' – as hot provocations to cool European modernism and its minimalist pretensions. The showroom/lounge room dialectic built up between Luscombe's exhibition of new painters at Sutton's Project Space, Fresh Paint, and here with Bauhaus Fisher Price (a title, incidentally, lifted from a quote about Memphis) neatly parallels this tension between form and function and its ironic inversion.

'Function follows form' follows on from 'form follows function' and then Luscombe inverts it again. She enacts a 'corrective' sleight-of-hand, a double inversion that neither quite nullifies Branzi's critical stance nor reorients it along functional (confusingly: formal) lines.

The new stance speaks with unexpected clarity, not of modern design or of history-at-large, but of the state of contemporary painting.

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Pattern: Nathalie du Pasquier