

ARTFORUM

PROJECT

DAVID KENNEDY CUTLER

By Jeff Gibson

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DAVID KENNEDY CUTLER repeatedly upends the dichotomous correlation of figure and ground by layering, cutting, and folding form and content into perceptual conundrums whose cognitive and sensory apprehension demands a gleefully intense level of scrutiny. Puzzling out the organizational logic of the planes and signifiers comprising his compositions can be dizzying, disorienting even, yet the effortless grace of his considerable facility for picture- and object-creation imbues his at once painterly and photographic concoctions with an immensely satisfying air of scrappy elegance. Kennedy Cutler's project for this issue reproduces preexisting pieces that have been further abstracted and illusionistically welded via digital manipulation to the pages upon which they appear. As is commonly the case with this artist's oeuvre, there is an underlying preoccupation here with the conditions and possibilities of the work's making. However, unlike his process-oriented forebears, most notably Robert Cumming and Robert Morris, with their relatively cold Conceptual posturing, Kennedy Cutler is as much concerned with aesthetic sensation as he is with material reflexivity.

As for the heavily mediated content woven into these physically and technologically torqued and discombobulated forms, the artist calls upon a variety of items typically associated with domesticity and artistic labor, often simultaneously, symbolically linking the two spheres. Take, for instance, the wonky seven-legged stool appearing on two of these pages—four-color halftone prints of rough-and-ready image transfers from ink-jet printouts of a replica joke stool Kennedy Cutler had fabricated from a picture he stumbled upon on the internet. The toppled seat, its eccentric structure aside, bespeaks a banal functionality that, in tandem with the semiotically loaded tulips and poppies intertwined among its legs, is both empirical and poetically allusive in effect. Similarly, the wooden carpenter's mallets appearing elsewhere in this project were once again made to order (the artist prefers objects to images for his primary source material). In this instance the motif was used not only as a compositional element but, IRL, as a pummeling tool in amously bonkers durational performances where the artist literally inserted his own body—along with multiple self-clad mannequin clones—into his art by smashing his way into 3D tableaux framed by the gallery walls.

Kennedy Cutler's work is fundamentally combinatory, fusing the denotative to the connotative, the real to the representational, and the analytic to the expressive through the mutual integration of figure, ground, and audience, right down to the printed object you currently hold in your hands.

PROJECT: DAVID KENNEDY CUTLER

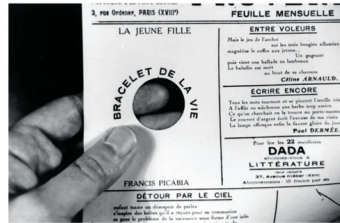


[Picabia's] *La jeune fille* . . . so reverses figure/ground relations that its ground becomes a figure against the space of the world—or perhaps better, its ground becomes a frame for a figure now readable as literally transparent.

—George Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris* (MIT Press, 2007)

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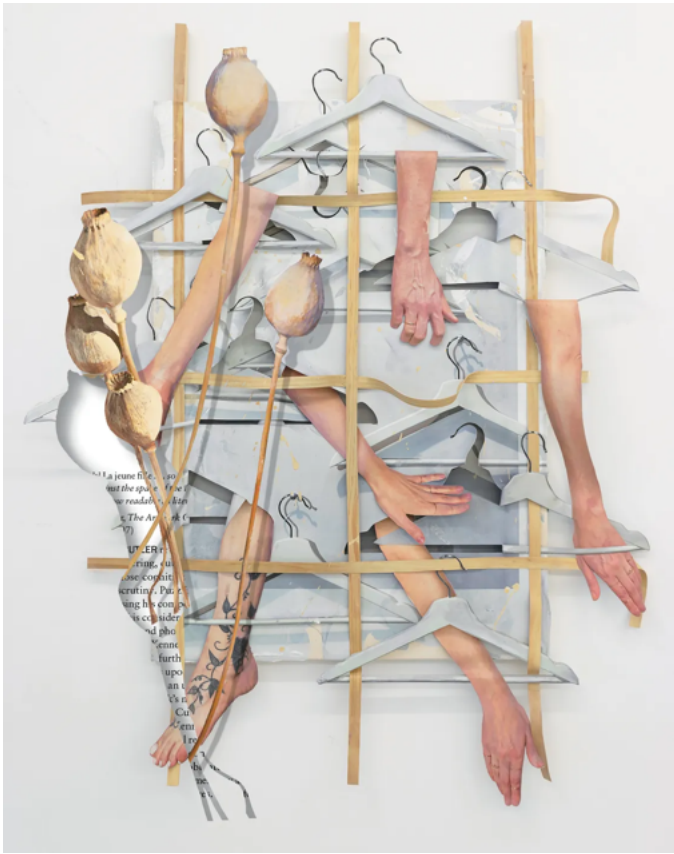


Above: Francis Picabia, *La jeune fille* (The Young Girl), from *Proverbe* 4, 1920. Photo: George Baker.

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—Jeff Gibson





KULLE MENSUELLE
ENTRE VOLEURS
 C'est de la France...
 C'est de la France...
 C'est de la France...
ECRIVE ENCORE
 C'est de la France...
DADA
LITTÉRATURE

©2010. Photo: George Batais.

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