

Michael Salter

Jeff Bailey

The substantially amusing, busy and cohesive collection of product-oriented works that made up Michael Salter's exhibition "Are You Sure" was ornamented by a suite of slip-cast porcelain figurines (2007) that seemed to float along a gallery wall. Salter dubbed these 10½-by-5½-by-5½-inch creatures "Subzer-o": serial humanoids frozen in space, each bearing a graphic device on a tunic. The near-fluorescent-red *Subzer-o: fallen king* sports a reductive royal profile, its black crown dripping black blood, while the black-glazed *Subzer-o: splats* is embellished with golden bursts like a passive target unable to dodge. Recalling international signs, the circular logo of *Subzer-o: screwing oneself* consists of a finger of one hand passing through a circle made by the other hand. Salter provided a cardboard shipping tube for each, with an image of the figure and a text attributing indecision or depression as principal attributes.

Another serial expression from 2007, the 22-by-28-inch digital C-prints titled "Situations Unknown" have something of the flat-line affect of an Alex Katz or John Wesley image, each with its core sample of suburban reality. Salter offers the idea of the single-floor tract house, banal and apparently unpopulated. *Testing 1-2-3* consists of one such house, with an ordinary white plastic chair, an amplifier, a stand and a microphone on a patch of lawn adjacent to a sidewalk figured with a bright orange traffic drum and caution light, as though in anticipation of performance. *Through the Blinds* features two houses joined by a single cracked driveway,



View of Michael Salter's exhibition, showing *Styrobot*, 2007, polystyrene packing materials, 12 feet tall; at Jeff Bailey.

the blinds of one house parted at eye level. A third, *Burning Billboard*, features the improbable enactment of its title, a composition repeated in a related work, a five-minute animation loop. The burning views of Ruscha come inevitably to mind.

The hilarious motorized *Pick Me a Winner* offered a small molded nose mounted on the wall, its mechanism sending a finger relentlessly scouring. The pink laser-cut vinyl images captured in *Icon Mash-Up* were applied directly to a gallery wall, a tumble of recognizable imagery. In such works, Salter seems to toy with the replicable quality of a culture represented by freshly designed or appropriated images. As though to dem-

onstrate the notion, *Styrobot* (2008) dominated the gallery. It is a massive, ceiling-high robot made of ordinary discarded polystyrene packing forms, protective materials considered to be among the most recyclable into home products and building materials and, as witnessed here, into art. Not fully symmetrical, the robot manqué stood on mammoth feet, one arm extended, in perpetual stasis.

—Edward Leffingwell