

HYPERALLERGIC

Francesca Fuchs Tenderly Renders the Small and Private

Fuchs's quiet paintings and ceramics pay tribute to the small, private objects that accompany us through life and ultimately anchor us in time.

by Lauren Moya Ford | February 21, 2022



Francesca Fuchs, "Reclining Woman" (2021), acrylic on canvas, 30 x 40 inches (all images courtesy the Art Museum of Southeast Texas)

BEAUMONT, Texas — The two pieces at the entrance of *Francesca Fuchs: Serious and Slightly Funny Things* at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas aren't quite what they seem. From afar, "Acapulco Mug" (2021) looks like a colorful, mass-produced coffee cup. Closer inspection reveals that it's actually a richly textured, hand-built vessel, its '70s-era floral motif carefully copied in oil paint. Likewise, the framed drawing "Hera"

(2020) on the wall nearby is actually a painting, its frame, mat, and image rendered in the Houston artist's signature muted colors and thin acrylic washes.

The two items come from Fuchs's own history: the mug is a copy of a cup from her childhood home in Germany, and the goddess is a reference to her father, who was a scholar of antiquities. Other works in the show portray objects that she grew up looking at, like artworks by family friends and rocks she decorated as a child. But Fuchs isn't pushing pure autobiography here, nor is she trafficking in the polished tricks of trompe l'oeil. Instead, the artist wants to capture how we picture things in our memory. Her quiet paintings and ceramics pay tribute to the small, private objects that accompany us through life and ultimately anchor us in time.



Installation view of *Francesca Fuchs: Serious and Slightly Funny Things* at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas (AMSET)

Despite her paintings' patient detail, Fuchs does not work from direct observation. Her paintings emerge from photographs and drawings of her subjects, which she sets against empty, white surfaces that slow us down and focus our attention. Attention is a key word

here: Fuchs's blank backgrounds are painted in a subtle but stunning variety of hues, reminding us that even our conception of the color white isn't fixed. Her chalky palette and soft brushstrokes suggest the image in question without placing it into sharp focus, leaving room for the subjective play of recollection and revision. Although her work is rooted in physical things, Fuchs creates from the interior world of the mind's eye, where the act of conjuring an image is inevitably colored by feelings, memories, and impressions.

Whether they're freighted with cultural or art historical meaning or represent more personal moments, each of Fuch's figures is rendered with tender, equalizing care. "Hadrian" (2020), an image of the sculpted head of the Roman emperor, hangs beside "Candlestick" (2019), a clay piece Fuchs made as a child. On another wall, "Ladybug" (2019), a painted childhood stone, joins "Buddha" (2020), an ancient-looking artifact. Seen together, the works gently democratize the value of the things we surround ourselves with. As we continue to spend more time indoors with these sorts of objects, Fuchs's work offers a thoughtful meditation on their substance in our lives.

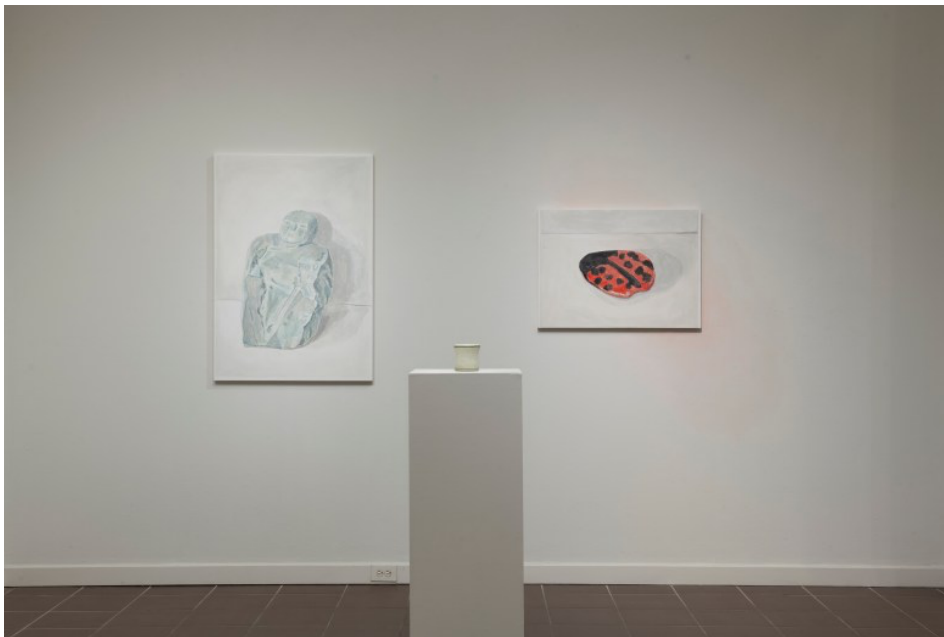


LEFT: Installation view of *Francesca Fuchs: Serious and Slightly Funny Things*, AMSET

RIGHT: Francesca Fuchs, "Painted Rock (yellow/green)" (2021), acrylic on canvas, 25 x 18 3/4 inches



Francesca Fuchs, "Biese 3" (2020), acrylic on canvas, 18.5 x 20 inches



Installation view of *Francesca Fuchs: Serious and Slightly Funny Things*, AMSET

Francesca Fuchs: Serious and Slightly Funny Things was curated by Caitlin Clay and continues at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas (500 Main St, Beaumont, Texas) through March 13.

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