

# frieze

## Guyton/Walker

MAMbo, Bologna, Italy



Guyton/Walker, *Untitled* (2008), installation view

Some art seems inevitable, like it was just bound to happen. Of course, there are different kinds of inevitability. There's historical inevitability: Duchamp or Pollock, where it is impossible to imagine 20th-century art without them. Then

## About this review

Published on 29/02/08  
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there is the kind that is so in the air that it would seem a crime to 'author' it. The work of Guyton/Walker falls squarely into the latter category, which is abundantly confirmed by their most recent collaborative effort in Bologna's MAMbo.

Invited by in-house curator Andrea Viliani, the duo has invested a space of the newly refurbished former factory with a surfeit of their work in a variety of forms, which include their signature paint cans, silk-screened and ink-jet canvases, two wax monolith sculptures and three hanging light fixtures. The room is organized in islands of cans – here analogous to Warhol's Brillo boxes – variously amassed in massive, uneven groups and small, scattered archipelagos. Upon entering, one is confronted with a tall narrow canvas upon which an image of two stacked chairs, Fischli / Weiss's *Outlaws from Quiet Afternoon* (1984), is totemically repeated in such a way that it is reduced to mere geometric motif. The imagery and lurid tones have been applied in a multitude of layers, suggesting a markedly painterly process, though resulting from silk-screened image superimposed upon silk-screened image.

Above hang three light fixtures made of coconuts (both real and fabricated) upon which a variety of protuberant lightbulbs have been affixed, each ensemble clustered like grapes. Newer to the duo's vocabulary are two large wax monoliths, which look like outsized parodies of John McCracken sculptures. Their waxen white surfaces have been unevenly enveloped with black silkscreen prints of tiny, Photoshopped checkerboard motifs, which are applied throughout the exhibition space with reckless abandon. The checkered pattern – the point of departure for any Photoshop project – incidentally represents one of the exhibition's many reversals: imposed upon various doctored images, the pattern could be read as a stamp of inauthenticity.

Along the back wall is a series of canvases, whose principle of production is – like everything else in the exhibition – the recycling of used imagery, layers and layers of brightly-coloured images fused to near illegibility. Another new group of paintings pays all but direct homage to Christopher Wool, comprising scattered, scanned images of halved coconuts surrounded by crudely applied fields of white. These paintings are perhaps the mostly convincingly repulsive in the exhibition, yet nevertheless manage to seduce, via their chic homeliness and strange, photographic sense of depth. Meanwhile the labels on the hundreds of cans bear images of fruit in addition to scanned images of the cans themselves. Despite the multiplicity of impersonal technological procedures and references, the overall effect of the spectacular installation is a highly textured, even cloying sense of immersion. A sense of the organic is somehow conveyed via the inorganic and the sprawling mass of thoroughly processed, undead imagery begins to teem with life. It's as if the dormant practice of the artists, who haven't

collaborated for two years, somehow proliferated in their absence, accruing a density, improbable texture, and an unchecked tendency to self-replicate in the interim.

All the supposedly irreverent bases are obediently whistled through here, from Rauschenberg, Warhol, Wool, and Prince to the ready-made to the dutiful blurring of boundaries between sculpture and painting, high and low, painting, graphic art, design and advertising, not to mention the unorthodox use of facsimile technologies (scanners and ink jet printers) to paint. Bracketing such notions as 'meaning', 'content' and 'criticality' and then doubly and triply orphaning everything else in scare quotes, if this work could be said to be even remotely critical of anything, it would be its own inevitability. Whatever the case may be, the treacherous beauty of graphic and painterly excess it simultaneously proffers, disavows and purports to preempt today, will no doubt be indiscriminately (re)absorbed into 'the way of the things' tomorrow – but that too has been foreseen.

**Chris Sharp**