

ArtReview



Mark Bradford
and other tales from the Venice Biennale

Derya Akay *Pumice*

Del Vaz Projects, Los Angeles 27 January – 27 April

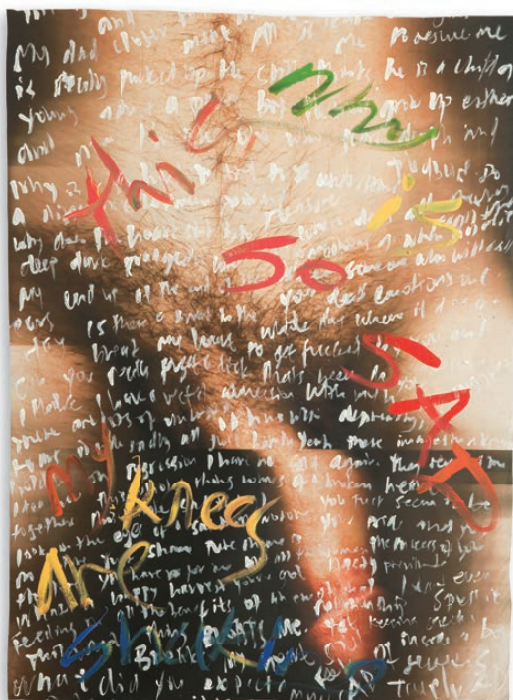
The poetry of a recipe might appear to reside in its list of ingredients: logwood and indigo, rudbeckia and eucalyptus, coreopsis and walnut husk and madder root. In an actual poem, it might seem to squat in the words. But anyone who has tried either (the poetics or the recipe) truly knows that the poetry of both is not on the page but in your mouth.

In the two spare bedrooms of the apartment that make up Del Vaz Projects, Derya Akay has left T-shirts that appear like cum-rags for colours ejaculated from his garden (which grows the ingredients listed above), as well as stitched-together photographs of a tattooed lover's flesh, hanging acetate sheets rolling down from the ceiling and curling on the floor riddled with words inscribed freehand and printed. On the wall of one room hangs a cut of wood lath from the artist's flooded Vancouver apartment, bearing the brightest splooges of impastoed paint. Wilting flower petals are tucked into its cracks. Next to it on the white wood floor sits a Plexiglas replica of the lath,

looking like it's been pressed against the original (paint stains on the clear plastic offer evidence of coupling). Those goeey pigments have been dusted with paprika and borage, sumac and turmeric, all filched from the Del Vaz spice rack. Between these works sits one of two bouquets in rough-skinned ceramic pots, titled *Vessels for Nicole* (2015), the flowers and foliage a loose spray, as if plucked and bundled from wild fields en route to an evening date, one for each bedroom. Peeling through those stitched-together scans of that lover's body, stacked one on the other in a box, his armpit decked all around with tats (and a chain whip over his heart and a spiderweb above his belly button), I turn the pages to a hard cock pressed against a scanner bed between two muscular thighs, cut by the stitch of images just so. The entire print of this corporeal atlas is lined with scrawled words, but only the large ones overwriting it all are truly legible: 'this is so sad [...] my knees are shaking'. It is not my lover, but I can surely taste the grief and desire on my lips.

Food and flowers, time and words, gardens and dreams, distance and longing, the tactile skins of ceramics and the brightest colours of spiced pigment – these are the sensual ingredients that make up Derya's show, all of it an expansion from a short-run book published last year by Perro Verlag and titled *A Flower as a Poem*. The words are a mess of layering, legible at times, but it's more likely that these loose, smeary letters aren't meant to be read but experienced. Like a plea faintly overheard through bedroom walls, you can sense the texture of their emotion even if you can't understand the exact words.

In the corner of each room of the exhibition sits a single bed with white blankets and sheets, big enough for only one body. I want to lie on the bed. The proprietor of Del Vaz, Jay Ezra Nayssan, surely wouldn't mind. I want to sleep away an afternoon smelling the ingredients, the shadows of the acetate words shifting through the room as the sun bends towards dusk. I want to dream near these artworks. *Andrew Berardini*



Poetry Painting (Scotty), 2016–17, inkjet print, acrylic paint, beeswax, ink.
Courtesy the artist and Del Vaz Projects, Los Angeles