

ArtReview

The stillness of a picture and movement of the living: technological magic animates creatures on the other side of the looking-glass, curiously camouflaged as fantasyland harlequins and dreamy chimeras, costumed creepsters and mirrorland pillowmen; sometimes only an oddly coloured hand or two appears, rolling and snaking clay of the same weird hue.

Framed and hanging on the whitewalls without any obvious gadgetry in the form of trailing wires or digital players, these pictures possess flatscreen televisions. Some are partially occluded by either anonymous abstractions (the kind Dianna Molzan affectionately enlivens in her curious paintings) or, as in *Pendulum* (all works 2014), where its maker, Brian Bress, Artschwagerishly employs glossy wood paneling found in retro countertops, with a single triangle cut to fit an image of an unmoving humanoid, hands painted grey, wearing a head like a kaleidoscopic geode cracked smooth down its centre and sitting in a hanging chair, swinging back and forth, ceaselessly.

Over the last years, the slow and silly logic of Bress had aged the plodding pace

and silly logic of Saturday-morning cartoons into a beautifully surreal, and often disconcerting, adulthood. Here the artist has dived beyond the pyjama-ed half-sleep of sugar-crusted children's television and into the dreamscape of the night before, sweaty sheets tussled and weird visions dancing across shuttered eyelids, moving with lugubrious, almost spooky slowness. These wouldn't be the first moving pictures to hang in a white cube, but it's hard for me to recollect ones that move so much and so well in relation to their screen.

One partially occluded LED shows a marshmallowy pillowman (no relation but spiritual to Martin McDonagh's play) power-sawing holes into his tableau that fit the holes in the panel covering it (*Four Acts*), or in a diptych, two playdough-faced gentleman draw Pablo Picasso-ish drawings on the glass of the screen that separates us from them (*Doctor/Patient #1 (on tan and violet lines)*). The cracked crudity and elegant lines, the displacement of time and space, weirdly square with Bress's curious compositions, his own unique varietal

of sophisticated childishness. Masks and other manner of subterfuge played a part in Picasso's aesthetic, leading him to declare imperiously to Gertrude Stein upon seeing a cannon painted with camouflage on the Boulevard Raspail, 'C'est nous qui avons fait ça.'

Kiddies hardly ever see (or know to name) a harlequin; camouflage after Warhol (and militarily, after satellite imagery and sonar) is more fashion than function; and the heads of sleeping babes now fall onto the surrealistic pillows of touchscreen computers, a visual toy Picasso certainly lacked. Our visions dance with a light we can finger. Though it takes a certain amount of time for a civilisation to absorb and retain a new technology before artists can successfully transmit through it as medium, Bress's graceful video-pictures don't seem to date themselves from their handling, but rather engage with a complex visual imagery the proverbial metaphor of painting as a window or mirror, a weird screen that projects our desires, our visions, our dreams back at us. *Andrew Berardini*

