

MULTIMEDIA
IDENTITY GAMES
JILLIAN MAYER

ARCHIVE
VS CULTURAL TABOO
ALYSE EMDUR

BATTLE
REPRESENTATION
+ THE GAZA FLOTILLA

SCENE
RADCLIFFE BAILEY,
HARMONY KORINE + MORE



DEBO EILERS NEW YORK

Debo Eilers' work offers both transparency and chaos. Sharing an aesthetic with artists like Jason Rhoades, Jonathan Meese, and Paul McCarthy, he may well belong to Jerry Saltz's "New Cacophony"—a largely male tribe whose practitioners relish the perverse, baroque, catatonic, and carnivalesque. The centerpiece of Eilers' recent solo show, *In your house.x*, is a grotto-like passageway on the side of the gallery that leads downstairs [On Stellar Rays; May 8—June 12, 2011]. The passage's tiled and once-white walls recall an asylum more than a gallery. As a gesture of welcome, perhaps, smiley faces are finger-etched into the thickly smeared red and blue acrylics and the artist's own masticated chocolate chip cookie paste.

This ruin was the site of at least two of Eilers' ecstatic and debauched performances, which are documented in the video works on view downstairs. In one, Eilers stuffs cookies into his mouth and torpidly plasters this masticated paste into his wig and onto the walls. In the other, he and a female co-star play like two children given Budweiser and Red Bull and locked in a closet full of toys, paints, and prosthetic breasts. They get wasted. They prod and paint each other in their Sesame Street underpants. They record and loop their voices and the irritating sound bytes of children's learning computers, reveling in an inane delirium. Eilers' eccentric performances provide a key to his other works. As such, these untranslatable happenings provide a microcosm of his process and iconography. Yet, however fecund and relevant, they also seem to balk at any depth of meaning. Here is a practice informed by booze and nonsensical charades, they seem to proclaim. So what?

Several of Eilers' flamboyant and baroque sculptures feature alloy scaffolds bonded with balled tumors of neon epoxy. Most allude to the video works in both oblique and literal ways. *Horsepower*, 2010, looks a little like a Malevich composition in three dimensions. In fact, it is a figurative sculpture of a dancing couple whose contorted heads, made of stiffened t-shirt balls, bear the faces of Cookie Monster and Elmo. *Moonch*, 2011, is a

bright pink Giacometti-like billygoat bedecked with rainbow-studded belts. Its hind legs are deep in a tangled network of vinyl-coated wires holding Plexiglas-mounted screengrabs. In *Elavil*, 2011, small colored tiles protrude at random—like a deconstruction of Ellsworth Kelly's pixelated spectrums. Two cloth pieces, coated in a rich, oily, black epoxy, shroud a digital collage and are suspended from the tiles. The epoxied cloth and tiles resurface in other works, many of which also feature a cubist multiplication of surfaces and textures and a half-fractured, half-digitized geometry.

Toward the end of the press release, Eilers asserts that the show's many cookie references have to do with websites' cookies and the lack of privacy in social networks. However, this assertion follows a few absurd pronouncements such as, "The standardizing of value in their serial printed columns was a challenge to poets like Cookie Monster, who responded by playing with cookies." In this, Eilers carefully unhinges a text that normally serves a specific purpose for the gallery, and which is usually as predictable as it is literal. Surprisingly, though, he still—perhaps only facetiously—offers a way of reading his work: "The tension generated by different cookies—between the freedoms they offer and the constraints they impose—informs the whole of Eilers' work." He goes on, "This goes for the aesthetic apparatus as much as the institutional and the carnivalesque." I have no doubt that there's something driving his kooky, childish camp. Yet, with his parade of Monster energy drink cans and Cookie Monsters, Eilers seems less concerned with cookie quandaries than he is interested in literal semantic pivots and habitual self-quotation. These features—like the looped voice recordings in his video performance—emphasize his delight in temporary caprice and the gratuitous and narcotic cacophony of the present.

—Natalie Bell