

ART LIES

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DALLAS

Rhys Davies-Gaetano
Marty Walker Gallery

Just past a room full of abstract paintings by his father, Nick Gaetano, is a modest, raw and ultimately uneven show by a young *bricoleur*, Rhys Davies-Gaetano. Found objects stuck together to uncanny effect assemble a world that is simultaneously cartoonish, sad and strangely funny. The largest and best piece of this group is *Family*, a title that becomes oddly Oedipal with the work of Davies-Gaetano's father in such close proximity. Hung on one wall, *Family* is a series of mechanized sculptures reminiscent of early Tim Hawkinson. From left to right, there is a "Mom" composed of an electric can opener, a mixer and a hairdryer that blows up her skirt. In between the parents are two pairs of children's overalls. Kegs of beer act as stand-ins for their torsos, spouts substituting for their private parts. And finally there is "Dad," a pair of pants connected to a machine that periodically zips and unzips his fly. The mechanical aspects of this piece come on and off without warning, sparking a loud crash of movement and then dying down just as fast. Like explosions of laughter or anger, this family—with each outburst followed by equally resolute stillness—seems resigned to their own unease.

On the next wall is a group of untitled drawings—plans for future projects that read like private musings, journal entries or folk art with a touch that is at once delicate and crude. Images include a shark menacingly rising from the water but weighted down by a gravestone reading "RIP." Another entry imagines an electrical cord that desperately tries to be plugged in, only to be yanked away at every turn.

All the work in the show fit in a single suitcase. When Davies-Gaetano arrived in Dallas from New York, gallerist Marty Walker asked him if he needed anything and all he said was that he needed to find a can of "Easy Cheese." The result is a sculpture consisting of a can of this edible industrial substance with half of its contents cooked on a red-glowing light bulb.

In addition to his solo practice, Davies-Gaetano is also a member of the artist collective The Bruce High Quality Foundation, which attracted quite a bit of attention a couple of years ago for a project in conjunction with the Robert Smithson exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Smithson's *Floating Island*, a barge packed with small trees and shrubs, was being towed around the island of Manhattan as part of the exhibition. The collective pointed to this absurd gesture by following the barge in a small motorboat, which in turn was towing a small model of one of Christo's orange gates—another New York public art project that was supposed to frame Central Park. Like *Family*, this project framed a situation of context, adding multiple layers of meaning by pointing to influences with both subversion and respect. Rhys Davies-Gaetano is an interesting artist precisely for this reason. He embraces tradition and the new in a combination that allows for both humor and pathos.

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