



REVIEW:

**Frances Bagley: *Mixed Messages***

[Marty Walker Gallery](http://www.martywalkergallery.com)

2135 Farrington Street, Dallas

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In the past, **Frances Bagley's** sculptures of disproportionate and monstrously bulbous figures shrouded in yards and yards of liquid-y velour and velvety fabrics left a viewer with an insatiable longing to peek beneath the drapery to see what hid there. These sculptures were dreamlike, nightmarish even, and Ms. Bagley's play on scale and expectation always created a hauntingly tipsy, wonky sort of world in the gallery.

In a new show called *Mixed Messages* at **Marty Walker Gallery**, Ms. Bagley departs from her former pillowy-soft crawling creatures and forages out into new territory full of architectural gridworks and mixed-media concoctions that are puzzling as well as brave. Though interpretations of this work could go any number of ways, one that rings clear is the artist's desire to discuss and convey her working process, and her own interpretation of reactions to her previous work. In *Happy Daze*, (pictured, left) a mixed-

media piece employing gray felt, a metal lattice, plumbing pipes affixed with kitsch yard figures, and (among other things) a large screen that magnifies the face of an anonymous man. On a ledge in front of the face is a used can of Polycrylic, a plastic wood sealer with remarkable molding capacities. On the floor in front of the sculptural hodgepodge is a stack of pour buckets coated in plastic and topped with a letter box. Leaning into the cacophony is an upright felt cast of legs with a leaning, open torso that seem to at once receive and pour out all the information surrounding it. The figure plays the role of both the maker and the critic seamlessly.

Ms. Bagley makes an occasional return to her signature hunched fabric figures here, but the fabrics she employs in these are a departure as well -- an ugly, brownish afghan blanket and synthetic, polar fleece throws instead of shimmery polyesters. These new fabrics are molded to form figures, not draped over cast ones. In these Ms. Bagley turns her previous themes of mystery and illusion on their heads, upending her figures and mounting them to the wall and floor to reveal nothing beneath but hollowness. It's as if Ms. Bagley is feigning a revelation here, showing us but not showing us. She's teasing us, yet again, into wonder.

**by Lucia Simek**