

ARTFORUM



Cock 'n' Bowl, 2008, pastel, acrylic, cloth, makeup, pencil, and pen, 59 1/16 x 118 1/8"

CRITICS' PICKS

ISTANBUL

BADBAT

URA

MISIR APARTMENT FLOOR ONE 163 ISTIKLAL CADDESİ BEYOĞLU

July 26–August 22, 2008

Invited to spend five days in Istanbul and in that time produce an exhibition and performance, the members of BADBAT, a London-based collective, created an improvisation of trust in one another and in music, lyrics, and tactility. Made up of painter Joanne Robertson, musician Alec Kronacker, fashion designer Rebecca Fitzmaurice, and artist Rachal Bradley (who was unable to be in Istanbul on this occasion), BADBAT is both a band and an artistic language that positions itself between folk and sophistication. On the show's opening night, guitars, percussion instruments, and technical equipment littered the floor of the gallery, as if welcoming the audience to an informal rehearsal in a tidy studio to experience a slightly hippie-inflected conversation between the work and the music, the artists and the audience.

While the performance was decidedly folk, the works on display—Robertson's drawings with collage, paint, and text, a painting by Kronacker, and a rack of clothes by Fitzmaurice—form a structure and rhythm that deliver the more sophisticated side of BADBAT's approach. The gallery's invitation has given the group's members, and Robertson in particular, the opportunity to return to the routes of their work and be unusually free, expressive, and intuitive. In the corner of the gallery next to the clothes rack, two cloth bags, one adorned with a painterly cat's face, are pegged to arbitrarily placed blocks of wood; this simple DIY and takeaway statement sets the tone of the show. The works on paper and garments look to be in progress, but despite their sketchy style, they hold their own and are even linked thematically by numerous cross-references. A secondhand coffee-table anthology of photos, titled *The American Land*, is the source of the works' faux-nature angle. Grainy images of forests, animals, and mellow sunsets inhabit extensions of their environments imagined and painted by the artists. Cutouts from another found book—this one a manual comprising diagrammatic drawings of fridge interiors—respond to the technical setup of the show's inaugural night. Also applied to the drawings are black-and-white photographs shot locally, one of a childhood actor, legs clad in fake leaves, another a postcard of a posing couple. While BADBAT's music and the different references collaged together by the group all come from worlds far apart, here they inhabit the same bizarre, unusually pastoral, but still-distant American dream.

— November Paynter