

n and the Arab world, the exhibition also promotes the myth-
course of the personal story, a traditionally anthropologized,
ent, and humanistic narrative of “other” people and places
that masks the postcolonial politics of indigence inherent to such
museological endeavors.

As the accompanying curatorial statement suggests, the show was
conceived as “an invitation . . . to open a cultural dialogue that is not
centered on conflict and politics, but begins with the art and interwoven
histories of a selection of extraordinary photographers.” The desire to
foreground aesthetic production over politics is understandable, and
these images certainly stand on their own as inventive artistic state-
ments. Nevertheless, we should be wary of any insistence on *art before*
politics, since the very crux of this and many similar curatorial projects
inevitably contains a political kernel. To frame an exhibition around
one of the most vexed geopolitical hot spots and to delineate it around
national and gender difference is still the privilege of the Western
museum, which has the mandate to define its terms of engagement with
respect to aesthetic plurality, so long as such subjects are not too
uncomfortably political.

—Nuit Banai

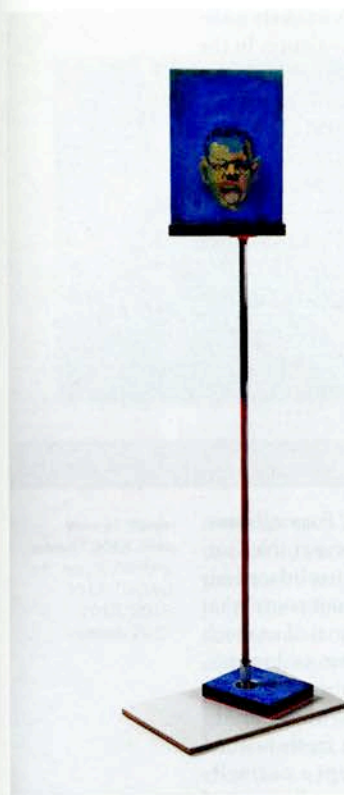
Steve Locke

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

The main motif in Steve Locke’s exhibition “There Is No One Left to
Blame,” curated by Helen Molesworth, was the male head, sticking out
its tongue in a gesture that’s half insouciant celebration and half angry
fuck-you. Themes of masculinity and homosexuality, both important
issues in the artist’s work, were certainly manifest in this exhibition,
but color—in both its painterly and racial significance—was Locke’s
main subject this time. The slipperiness of pigment, both on the surface
of canvases and on bodies in the age of Obama, predominated. With
portraits made for our purportedly postracial present, Locke revisits
James Baldwin’s notion of whiteness as a cultural construction that
depends upon blackness, by unsettling the fixity of color in his paint-
ings. He situates his figures’ skin tones on a shifting chromatic spec-
trum, employing strangely mixed colors and multiracial features, and
thus obstructing binary readings of race.

Painted with adept, brushy strokes, Locke’s heads are Goyaesque,
but sweet colors abound. The grotesqueness of his figures’ visages is in
contrast with the predominantly pastel- and jewel-toned palette and
the artist’s use of decorative patterns. Backgrounds are often over-
painted onto the figures, eating away at their boundaries, and colors run
off the heads into their surroundings. At the ICA, numerous paintings
were clustered together, salon style, with some either slightly sinking
into or protruding out from the walls. Eight were mounted on anthro-
pomorphic “bodies” made of metal pipe with wooden bases and situ-
ated throughout the room. Locke pays special attention to the edges
and sides of his work, covering them with floral wallpaper or painting
them with fluorescent pigments whose reflections stain the surrounding
walls and floor. These various strategies transformed the show into an
immersive environment—if figure and ground bled into each other in the
paintings, the freestanding works took over the gallery space, seemingly
implicating the viewer in contemporary debates about race.

The key to the exhibition was found in a cluster of three interrelated
works. Two of the paintings on stands were arranged as if in conversa-
tion, or engaged in an allegorical face-off. The smaller of the two, *All*
Received Wisdom, 2007–12, features a white figure with a half-open
mouth, as if caught mid-declination while soberly extemporizing,
its base pushily overlapping that of its interlocutor. *A Brief History*,



Steve Locke, *There Is No One Left to Blame*, 2005–13, mixed media, 70½ x 30 x 22”.

Locke defiantly navigates the boundaries between portraiture, decora-
tion, and polemic with a rudely outthrust tongue. His figures are both
angry and vulnerable. Protesting the multicultural dissolution that they
nonetheless wear on their faces, they stick out their tongues at those
who still try to fix color as an absolute marker of identity, while recog-
nizing the difficulties of being caught in between.

—William Kaizen

POTOMAC, MD

Peter Fischli and David Weiss

GLENSTONE

This gorgeously curated overview-*cum*-retrospective of the polymor-
phously parodic work of Peter Fischli and David Weiss further benefits
from the compelling amalgam of sophistication and bucolic splendor
that is Glenstone—the private museum just outside Washington, DC,
that houses the collection of Mitchell and Emily Wei Rales. Carefully
grouped into several galleries connected to a central pavilion, the exhibi-
tion (curated by Emily Rales in collaboration with Fischli himself)
consists solely of pieces from Glenstone’s collection and will remain on
view through February 2015. The Swiss duo’s first US survey since the
1990s and the first major institutional exhibition of their work since
the passing of Weiss last year, this show provides a welcome opportunity
to reconsider through-lines in Fischli & Weiss’s production.

The main pavilion is populated with sixty-three works atop white
wooden plinths. These include clay sculptures and rubber casts from
the series “Suddenly This Overview,” 1980–2012; “Walls, Corners,
Tubes,” 2009–12; and “Rubber Sculptures,” 1986–2005. In these
bodies of work, a glut of subjects that range from the momentous (as
in *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, 1981–2012) to the mundane (as in
Plumbing Part, 2009) present themselves, each individually isolated,

2005–12, meanwhile, towered above, its
racially indeterminate head looking out into
space and ignoring its partner. A lizard-like
tongue projects out of its mouth, and it has
one eye closed, making its expression even
more bizarre. Although not apparent from
the front, an obsequious blackface figurine
kneels on a platform attached behind the
canvas. It is as if the head in the painting is
tortured by ideas of discrimination and the
continued, if diminished, authority of
whiteness. *The Rising Up*, 2013, the biggest
painting in the show, hung next to the two
conversers. In it, a large, racially ambigu-
ous head with a sloppily projecting tongue
coalesces out of a vast field of the kinds of
pinks that are still too broadly deemed
“flesh” tones today. Whiteness is depicted
here as a sickly blush that also colored the
walls of the gallery itself: Locke mounted the
piece on a beveled panel whose fluorescent-
orange edge reflected onto the surrounding
wall, creating a pink glow. Meanwhile, the
faces found in other paintings pushed away
from both whiteness and blackness, aggres-
sively sliding between yellows, reds, even
aquamarines.

By creating conflicts between paint on
canvas and pigment on skin in these works,