

## Art in America

### Jason Fox at Feature

In the past, Jason Fox has attempted to combine the



Jason Fox: *Free Time*, 1997, acrylic on canvas, 58 by 70 inches; at Feature.

unfettered imaginative flights and visceral graphic intensity of comics and video-game iconography with the high seriousness of painting and sculpture. Continuing in this vein, his recent paintings and drawings are garish two-toned renditions (mostly red and blue) of superhero and monster figures drawn in the exaggerated body-builder's physique

typical of comic books. Fox also presented a sculptural installation in the center of the room.

His drawings, reminiscent of the felt-tip marker doodlings that often cover student notebooks, exude the intoxicating mixture of power, sex and fantasy at the heart of popular media and of teenage esthetics. In these drawings, monstrous gorilla characters and weirdly erotic spread-eagled figures (with male and female attributes) emerge from or disappear into glutted compositions set in wildly abstracted, 1970s-style, wood-paneled, shag-carpeted basement rec rooms.

The paintings are much the same but larger, featuring a rich repertoire of marks; a stiff, symbolic use of illusionistic interior space; and the juxtaposition of "low" cultural iconography with even lower parodic appropriations of "high" art (such as abstract paintings). In a recreation-room setting, *Tiny Dancer* features a reptile/dinosaur palming a tri-color basketball and a King Kong-like creature outfitted in bell-bottoms. In *a Castle Dark* shows a strange hooded figure applying pigment to canvas with six arms; here Fox seems to suggest that superheroes might just be artists.

A sculpture titled *This Thing* is an absurd anthropomorphized treelike figure; it recreates in 3-D the awkward, comical tension of the paintings and drawings. Clothed in overalls, the character

stands in the middle of a sheet of canvas spread across the floor. It has thick stumps for feet and elongated branches for arms. Its headless neck extends upwards into a white Afro wig.

Fox's work seems to indicate that these powerful images are an enduring (if sublimated) psycho-visual interlude in the media-saturated social development of us all. This exhibition suggests that even as we grow older—absorbing new, perhaps less visceral visual experiences—the frenzied intensity and erotic sensuality of power pop need not be wholly discarded just because we now read more books without pictures.

—Calvin Reid