

# ARTFORUM

## Berta Fischer

JAMES FUENTES



View of "Berta Fischer," 2019. From left: *Gomolurin*, 2019; *Ubrix*, 2017; *Petutula*, 2019; *Sokal*, 2018.

### *November 2019 Print Issue*

Berta Fischer's show at the James Fuentes gallery felt like the happy wreckage of a good party. The Berlin-based artist's polychromatic acrylic-glass and neon-and-rope sculptures summoned a never-ending celebration for the sheer fun of it: an invitation to enjoy light and prismatic trickery in gestural forms that (un)furled and posed seemingly at whim. The effect was carefree but not careless—each thermoformed piece was expertly manipulated into a dynamic biomorph or watery, melty planes. Fluidity was achieved with rigor.

*Petutula*, 2019, was the host with the most, constructed of fraternal twin parts suspended side by side from the ceiling like jaunty marionettes mid-jig; each one was about seven feet tall and strategically positioned to greet visitors. The durable material had the deceptively whispery appearance of cellophane cut into rounded and exclamatory frills that glimmered with cool blues and frosty pinks. The same coloration was echoed in *Gomolurin*, 2019, a wall-dwelling companion piece that didn't quite dance, but imparted the metallic airiness of foil gift wrap or a deconstructed Mylar balloon at sea. The works all seemed very casual, like the flotsam and jetsam of a ninety-nine-cent store, and one almost wished something cataclysmic would happen to disrupt the scene. Or perhaps plastic itself was the cataclysm, an example of the beautiful problems we endeavor to create and struggle to solve—despite the prettiness of these works, they hinted darkly of oceanic trash vortices and a planet in peril.

In some instances, the wavy shapes of Fischer's megaplastics mimicked macroalgae, particularly the fuschia tangle of *Ubrix*, 2019, a clump of brazen curls that appeared ready to burst into flame, so vivid was the coralline glow. It was the smallest work in the room, barely a foot in diameter, mounted about nine feet up the wall and boldly underscored by its own lively roseate shadow. The luridly hued *Hiroxi*, 2019,

positioned nearby at eye level, was beribboned by two individual but intertwining strips of hypergreen and fluorescent yellow—they writhed and looped across and through a rippling panel of gleaming hot purple, raspberry, and pearlescent silver. The material had been pushed to the brink, bruised with emphatic color. Fiber-optic glow toys and marine phosphorescence would easily have been at home here. The electric illumination of *Ubix*, 2017, a large hanging sculpture, glanced off the work's surface in subtle ways. Its bright duet of neon tubes—one in turquoise, one in orange—formed wonky curvatures that were bound by a crisscrossing network of elastic ropes in shades of chartreuse, recalling an errant game of cat's cradle. It was a sticky wicket, a spastic orbit that might spin in a space-ocean if it could.

*Sokal*, 2018, with its citrusy palette (orange, lime, grapefruit, lemon), was a dreamscape of sunny undulations, and seemed as dissolvable as gummies and sugar glass. Its simplicity was deceptive—though it appeared to be one structure, it was actually comprised of five parts clustered together, based on a diagram by the artist and mounted on straight hooks. Its unity was achieved through careful suspension rather than interdependent tension. From a distance, it managed to look as frolicsome and guileless as the rest of Fischer's work.

When I was at the gallery, an attendant showed me a second, less inviting space that housed five additional works that were in the process of being photographed: *Akadi*, *Atumb*, *Dosalis*, *Goris*, and *Zkiolsa*, all 2019. A tripod and camera were set up in the crowded room, and the sculptures were not easily viewable. I felt as if I were eavesdropping on them. But they spoke in volumes of excited color and movement—a dialect that Fischer uses fluently.

— Charity Coleman