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Brendan Fowler at Richard Telles Fine Art by Jody Zellen



Brendan Fowler, *Andrea* (2017), courtesy of the artist and Richard Telles Fine Art.

Brendan Fowler is interested in the relationship between photography and material culture, and his works transform photographic images into something unexpected. He is best known for his “crash piece” series (exhibited at MOMA in *New Photography 2013*), in which he combined numerous large-scale snapshots of his studio and his friends. He stacked the photos so that both the front and back of the frames were visible, thereby making them into something sculptural.

In a series of new portraits, Fowler continues to integrate his friends and aspects of his everyday life into his art. He utilizes an industrial embroidery machine originally designed for commercial purposes, for example, decorating baseball hats, hockey jerseys, etc., in order to create a dialog between modes of mass production and unique art objects. The machine algorithmically interprets original photographic imagery, reducing the photographs to their essential elements so that they become quasi-abstract representations.

Fowler collages the sewn images of his friends atop painted canvas and fragments of found fabrics, and the images often extend beyond the pictorial rectangle. Parts of clothing, including shirts, pants and labels from Fowler's clothing line, serve as the backgrounds for the embroidery.



Brendan Fowler, *Nathaniel* (2017), courtesy of the artist and Richard Telles Fine Art.

*Election Reform*, his private label, produces garments that are hybrids between art and fashion, and elements from these projects — T-shirts and sweatshirts with textured embroidery and large *Election Reform* logos— often appear in his artworks.

Fowler's portraits fuse the industrial and the hand-made, and in doing so, they become amalgamations that are part portrait and part clothing. Sometimes as in *Claudia* and *Nathaniel* (all works 2017) the texture of the face blends in with the material upon which it is sewn; whereas, in other works such as *Andrea* or *Ilias* the face pops out from the frame. The more complicated the juxtapositions, the more interesting the work. In *Alex*, for example the face is embroidered onto a blue and white striped button-down dress shirt that hangs well below the bottom of the frame. These quirky pieces are less about the subject than the materials and the process of their making. Fowler has mastered his machine and is able to create compelling portraits that bring together art and commerce in new and innovative ways.

Brendan Fowler, *New Portraits*, January 7 – February 11, 2017 at Richard Telles Fine Art, 7380 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, [tellesfineart.com](http://tellesfineart.com)