

Art LTD, July/August 2014

LOS ANGELES

Tim Ebner

at Rosamund Felsen Gallery

Tim Ebner's hand-sewn sculptures of schooling fish at Rosamund Felsen Gallery are a delightful feast for the eyes that elicit smiles from all audiences. They also celebrate Ebner's skills as a craftsman and his ability to excel at whatever medium he uses to create his works. His evolution from hard-edged geometric sculptures to childlike paintings of animals to these playful soft sculptures is the trajectory of a courageous artist who follows his instincts and is unwilling to be pigeon-holed. Ebner was a surfer, but is now a fisherman, whose materials and subject matter have shifted to follow his relationship to the sea. The relationship between the surfer or fisherman who travels atop the water looking down or into the sea and the fish that populate that environment informs his process. His early works evoked the surface and materials of surfboards whereas his current work articulates his love and fascination with sea creatures.

All the fish in each room of Ebner's exhibition are facing the same direction—suggesting they are part of the same school—ebbing and flowing in imaginary waves toward some unknown destination. Each fish is hand-crafted from exquisitely patterned upholstery fabric. The larger fish, about 3-4 feet in diameter, are supported by unique welded bases formed from twisted poles and rusty scrap metal. Many have large red lips and prominent glazed ceramic eyes, half-hidden behind fluttering eyelids with long lashes. Smaller fish attached to longer poles tower overhead as if following the larger ones upstream. Stuffed starfish and a single Manta ray dot the walls. The installation becomes a colorful array of contrasting patterns. One fish is made of black leather, one is zebra-striped, one is leopard-skinned. Some are flowered,



some are herringboned; few or none of the materials are associated with fish skin. The witty recontextualization of his appropriated fabrics lends the works their vibrant colors and patterns and raises wry comparisons between naturally evolved, biological patterning, fashion, and design. Ebner further imbues his fish with distinct personalities, as each has distinguishing characteristics, in its eyes, lips, fin, tail, fabric or base. With craft and concept working in concert, Ebner has created a whimsical and evocative undersea world that happily evokes an "Octopus's Garden."

—JODY ZELLEN