

LISA ANNE AUERBACH: AUERBACHTOBERFEST

DAVID PATTON LOS ANGELES
20 OCTOBER - 17 NOVEMBER



Auerbachtobberfest, 2007 (Installation view). Photo: Joshua White. Courtesy David Patton Los Angeles

Two handsome wool quilts cover the two front windows of the gallery, each with nearly identical design and text, one stating 'Things Can Only Get Better' and the other 'Things Can Only Get Worse'. On one side of the texts are images of unicycles, on the other is listed all the things that could go either way, from sweatshops, disease and the environment to 'my marriage'. On the edge of each is the legend 'Auerbachtobberfest 2007'. Los Angeles-based artist Lisa Anne Auerbach has woven into those literal banners for the show her aesthetic: personal politics, knitting, cyclist activism and humour. Five dressmaker's dolls hang by wire from the ceiling in the centre of the gallery, each clad in a knitted sweater and skirt of a design borrowed from sources ranging from the rock 'n' roll posturing of Cheap Trick to the bathroom sex shenanigans of Idaho Republican Senator Larry Craig. The knitwear, tailored to fit the artist, looks like the uniforms of a particularly subversive leftist cheerleading squad. Each sweater-skirt combo composes the wearable praxis of Auerbach in her first hometown solo since she graduated from Art Center in 1994.

Auerbach picks up where many feminist artists left off in reclaiming traditional crafts to fit a high art concept, but ditches much of the vaginal rhetoric to fit her own particular brand of knit politic: post-feminist, post-punk DIY, and a sometimes too-literal sloganeering tempered by a jokey irreverence. Her crafty practice expands beyond yarn and includes not only

her work as an artist but also as a freelance writer, photographer, bicycle activist and producer of all manner of 'zines, both online and in print, to spread the word (the title of one, *The Little Red Blog of Revolutionary Knitting*, begs the question of what to call knitter with revolutionary politics? A sweaterist?).

Along the walls of the gallery hang photographs of a diverse set of unicycles that were up for rent (at 10 cents an hour) at High Desert Test Sites (Auerbach's sometimes collaborator Andrea Zittel's outdoor kunsthalle and experiment in investigative living in the Mojave Desert). The different unicycles, shot on a white background, look immediately similar, but upon closer examination each has its own distinctive qualities, and each has been named by Auerbach. The precarious nature of riding a unicycle is supposed to form a metaphor for the larger state of the world, the press release citing Malcolm Gladwell's tiresome 'tipping point' as the unifying idea for the show. PR aside, there's something delightfully silly and charmingly whimsical about making sweaters based on those worn by rockers, cracking political jokes in knitwear and mixing metaphors out of the actual precariousness of riding a unicycle. The charm of the work avoids preciousness by being ballasted by Auerbach's success in bringing DIY into the gallery in a way that's conceptually savvy and activist-driven, without being too heavy-handed in its polemic. *Andrew Berardini*