



Anti-theft car

later date to marvel at one's wildly inaccurate estimations. In relation to first impressions, everything is in disguise.

On a local note, making car sculpture or work in LA always seems to be, in part, about Charlie Ray's work. It's interesting though that you openly "steal" from a source that has less to do with your work logically than, say, the Art & Language piece.

The drawing in the anti-theft silkscreen sketch is reminiscent of Charles Ray's Unpainted Sculpture (1997). It's a diagram that I found on the internet which is labeled with all the devices that can be added to a car to make it 'theft proof'. What's funny is that the sketch has been sitting on my desk unresolved for some time now. I think it might be unusable in that it's not made of units which can be separated. So the anti-theft car is really what it is—a dead end for car thieves (me). But Unpainted Sculpture, in a way, relates to my project only on the most superficial level since it's not a show that's been inspired by art about cars and I, myself, have no particular interest in cars.

What about this connection between car theft and art theft? What do you mean by mobilizing this cultural metaphor?

Work that motivates me tends to have this divide between what is apparent and what is not immediately given. For instance, when one reads the absolutely dense descriptive scenes in a Roussel novel. It is unbelievable to imagine the stories are based on internal rhymes. This idea of taking something and making it unrecognizable is mirrored in the

structure of the exhibition in that all the texts are written with rhyme charts and all the objects are made with rhymes that are not visually present in the show. One sees objects that may seem to have something to do with cars. The source is hidden in the same way a car thief might paint a stolen part and disguise it in a new context hoping to sell it without going to jail. We are always and only working with parts, thus as artists we are criminals because we have to steal.

Can you more specifically describe some of the pieces in these terms?

Yes. For instance, the text of the song is a rewritten version of the Woody Guthrie song "Take me Riding in the Car." There is no way anyone would ever know this since every single word has been dissected and re-rhymed. This is my sense of humor, to take a simple song about riding in a car and completely rework it, but to keep the story essentially the same. It's still a song about riding in a car, only its thieves who are riding. The melody of the rewritten song is composed of five notes which are based on the vowel sequence of the rewritten text. The music is a bit "hard" since after all it's for car thieves. There's a photo of a mirror in the shape of a car door. If you emphasize the first syllable of mirror so that it sounds like "ear" and the last syllable so that it sounds like "oar," together they rhyme with "rear" and "door." But this of course isn't what someone is going to think when they see it. There is wallpaper which is composed of silhouettes amidst an intricate pattern of leaves. They are thieves in leaves, thieves hiding and waiting to steal your car. There is also a sexy chrome lady hanging on the wall like one you might see on a truck bumper. But it's rusty. The title of the piece is "Busty," so it both rhymes with its exterior description but fits within the loose narrative of automobile culture. Each work has a description packed with rhymes but for the duration of the exhibition they are pawns of an auto-theft gang.

Yes, let's leave some of them hiding in plain view.

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Stephanie Taylor
CHOP SHOP

January 19 - February 27, 2006



Take	me	rde	ing	in	the	car	car	take	ya	riding	in	
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brake	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are
crack	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are
drake	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are
flake	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are
lake	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are
make	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are
quake	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are
shake	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are
snake	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are
steak	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are
spoke	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are
wake	over	bid	bing	been	are	are	are	are	are	are	are	are

CHOP SHOP: A Conversation between Stephanie Taylor and Juli Carson

Can you describe the associative method of your working process? You always seem to begin with a pun based upon the look or sound of a word that you've associated with a given site, and you metonymically proceed from there.

The concept of site specificity has been important for artists making a connection between artwork and exhibition space, but consequently it's become one of those overused terms that means almost nothing. When something becomes emptied this way, it's an attractive starting point because there's space for redefinition. So I begin by making a ridiculously simple sound association, say with the name of a gallery such as "Room." In this case "Room" leads to the sound "Vroom" and the project becomes about cars. This is site specific in the ludicrously empty way that this term is used colloquially. In its absurdity, it's also a critique of language that is thrown around in art discourse.

How does the idea of genre come into play from there?

In my first exhibition, I used the sound of my name to develop the story. "Stephanie Taylor" sounds like "stay funny sailor," and so the story was about a sailor. I once developed two exhibitions from a single diagram; one was about a "gutter foal," a term produced with rhyme in one of my texts. The other was about a mole, based on a rhyme with "foal." So the stories are developed in different ways each time. But it's never the case that I say "I'm interested in cars...I'm going to make a show all about them." And yet, the association isn't completely arbitrary. Cars are integral in Los Angeles, so they're obvious things to make art about. In fact, in this instance cars play centrally as a cover story for my texts, which are written from pre-formed sound sequences, liberally edited, and made into song and objects derived from rhymes. The fact that so many art works have been made about cars only makes me indistinguishable

among thieves, which of course is how thieves are happiest. The chosen genre is a self-imposed limitation. Each piece in the show must therefore have a sound-relation with its materials and also, usually in some more abstract way, tell the story of the car thieves. I try to work within the vernacular of a given genre, but I'm also always working within the vernacular of contemporary art.

Speaking of art vernacular, Eva Hesse was a prolific list maker, constructing endless word plays and titles. In fact, Rosalind Krauss, in her book *The Optical Unconscious*, cites Hesse's intentions on the absurdity of word play transferred to sculpture, which I think it really relates to your project: "'My idea,' she had said in 1970, speaking about the aesthetics of composition, of form, 'is to counteract everything I've ever learned or been taught about those things, to find something else...If something is absurd, it's much more exaggerated, more absurd if it's repeated.'" This was Hesse's tactic of repetition-as-absurdity. I bring this up because while others have cited literary models for your work, they usually don't bring up what I'd like to call the sculptural-semiotic model evoked by Hesse. Do you resonate with this model?

Yes, very much. I work with an additive process. Individual rhymes are based on the repetition of a sound. Sounds are limited in the number of things with which they rhyme. Each rhyme within a composition produces a portion of the narrative in that each work must be associated in some abstract way to car theft even if this means I tell a story about someone who wears a rat's bed on her head and goggles. Things get ridiculous quickly when rhymes are compounded. The stranger the story, the more process is revealed.

With all this repetition, contingency seems to be the driving force (forgive the pun). But it's not a force devoid of intellect or intention; in fact, your process is complexly semiotic.

Yes, there's always an element of surprise in what I am 'able' to make within these self-imposed limitations. But sometimes it's the case that I decide I want to make something specific and I simply find a material with a very elastic rhyme-relation to this thing. I allow myself all liberties when I need to change something to make it better. I sneak in phrases I find or write and have them pose as products of rhyme charts. The charts are more like a corrupt alibi than an art-making factory. Sometimes I have to stretch the boundaries of believability to make something work. For instance, in this exhibition, which is traveling to Galerie Nagel in Berlin, I introduced rhymes with mispronunciations. "Berlin" sonically breaks down as "ur/in" which became "cur" (car mispronounced) and "vin" (vehicle identification number). Normally "car" would require the syllable "ar" rather than "ur." The logic is that certainly somewhere

there exists a place where "car" is pronounced, "cur." This location, wherever it may be, is where the story takes place.

It's interesting how your brand of absurdity-as-paradox, which spins off visual/verbal puns, relates to the irrational act of lying out loud as a form of rational mimesis (or more corrupt alibi). It's what Lacan meant when he said "a too formal logical thinking introduces absurdities, even an antinomy of reason in the statement I am lying, whereas everyone knows that there is no such thing....If you say I am lying, you are telling the truth, and therefore you are not lying, and so on." So the surrealist-absurdist notion of "lying out loud" in order to hide - in a way - relates to your work.

Yes, I can think of another example: the Art & Language painting "Portrait of VI Lenin in the style of Jackson Pollock." When the painting traveled to the Soviet Union for exhibition, in order to pass the border censors, it was re-titled "Portrait of a Man in Disguise." By announcing in the title that it was "Disguised," it was able to pass through the censors because I think it was assumed that something trying to disguise itself wouldn't scream and yell about being in disguise.

No, it's counter-intuitive....

...I like making objects that are simple rhymes with material names. Viewers tend not to read visual art as a series of sounds. In this sense, the objects I make are made to be misread. The rhyme charts appear to be so systematic, and yet the stories that are produced are often so bizarre. But I don't see it as lying— it is often the case that things are not what they seem. It is necessary to make a story in the absence of comprehension. And it is not uncommon at a



Left: Rhyme list
Right: Art and Language, *Portrait of V.I. Lenin in the Style of Jackson Pollock*, 1980
Cover: *Rear Door Mirror*, 2005, color photograph