

I enter *Speed Dating* feeling as though I've interrupted a conversation.

I am greeted by two chairs sitting opposite each other, facing away slightly from one another. Not in competition but conversation, muttering quietly back-and-forth under a glow of hot pink. Tyler Jackson and Ed Bats' work doesn't speak over each other or at each other, but TO each other. Does that make sense? Maybe not – let me continue. To my right, Tyler Jackson's chair sits slumping, like an outstretched slinky or wax dripping from a candle. To my left, Ed Bats' chair sits with its spine straight; a clean incision is made on the chair's base, its guts poking out like ice cream.

Whilst Ed's work provides structure, Tyler's syrupy sculptures ooze in and amongst the gallery space, sitting like sugar in my mouth. As I shuffle to the back of the room, my eyes begin to follow the colourful contours of *No Title (Lollypop/GJ27)*, 2018; twisting like candy, liquidating, offering itself up to me. I half regret saying that the first time I saw Tyler's work (many moons ago) I didn't like it and I was never sure why. No rhyme or reason, I thought maybe we just weren't compatible – me and the art. I didn't match its mood or it didn't match mine. Maybe if I had had 8 hours sleep the night before or drank more water that day, things would have been different. Because art is only as powerful and as good as you allow it to be --- This time though, both moisturised and hydrated, things felt different. I approached the art, ready to make amends. The only thing that didn't work for me was the glass on the ground. At the back, between Tyler's *Untitled 1 & 2* is large pile of turquoise-blue glass, laid thin. Is it glass? I'm not entirely sure, but it reminds me of the glass at the foot of the trees on Taranaki street (opposite Mr Go's) --- in both cases, I just wonder why they're there. I don't want to say it lacks purpose because we all know that doesn't matter. It just doesn't seem to fit within the aesthetic of the rest of the show.

Let me think on that more. Somebody tell me I'm wrong.

As I look to my right, I spot parts of a tent assembled like a minimalist painting; blue, red and yellow, curving and extending in all the right places, strings hanging loose (the work of Ed Bats) --- Ed's work delivers the punch line seriously. It's like when someone tells a joke and you don't know they're joking. Straight face, without a snicker. I think my boy said it best when he declared, "art is just a practical joke". Ed presents us with objects without any objective / domestic bits-and-bobs rendered purposeless; leaving you with blinds without a window and a chair with a pole where your bum should be. What is nice is that Ed's work narrowly escapes being Duchamp look-alikes. Instead, there's a sincerity and softness to his work --- the slow fade of green on the blinds, the gentle strokes applied to painting snuggled in the gallery's far right corner.

I leave the gallery and walk out into the rain, making a mental note to buy a bottle of water.

Melina Payne,  
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