

Words by Emma Singleton

BEAUTIFUL ABSURDITY

**A stroll through palpable
moments of delight**

There's a seduction, an absurd beauty to everyday objects – be it a spoon, a cheese grater, a coffee maker, a chair, or a steam iron – that is overlooked by their function.

Though one of the simplest joys in life can be acknowledging that a spoon's negative space is precisely designed to hold the humble egg, and to then put this partnership to the test in an egg-and-spoon race.



The spoon and the egg form a perfectly modest yet effective partnership. This actuality is evocative of the childlike poetry that Lisa Jahovic seeks out when creating her work. It's part of the reason that the spoon has become somewhat of a recurring motif of hers, acting as a metaphor for new life, naivety, and playfulness. In *The Third Drawer* at Flowers Gallery in London's Mayfair, she wonderfully displays these everyday poetics by "bringing pre-existing objects to harmonise together in a way that doesn't ask for them to be disrupted, and for the relationship to be effortless."

The term 'arabesque' in art refers to "surface decorations based on rhythmic linear patterns of scrolling and interlacing foliage, tendrils" – when applied to music, it can indicate meandering themes.

Before entering the exhibition, the visitor engages with its poetic absurdity through Debussy's *Arabesque No.1* sounding in the stairwell. This atmospheric, melancholic piano piece lushly shifts rhythms and textures. The music grows louder upon stepping into the space, and seems to be the trigger that reveals the spiritual truths of the objects on display. The term 'arabesque' in art refers to "surface decorations based on rhythmic linear patterns of scrolling and interlacing foliage, tendrils" – when applied to music, it can indicate meandering themes. This sense of meandering is optimal for helping to pierce the somewhat solemn presentation of imagery in grainy greyscale. The visuals could outwardly be interpreted as overtly earnest, but with the music they become arguably frivolous. The tune serves as a lovely, flowing introduction that makes each of the pieces in *The Third Drawer*

enchanting, as Jahovic explains: "It works in tandem with the tempo of the mechanisms, creating an emotional quality to these everyday objects that become the film's protagonists."

"Dialogues Film", which is projected onto the wall, is excellent at connecting all the works. The film arguably serves as the opening of the 'drawer', in the sense that it exposes outright the individual movements of each object trapped inside of it. Used colloquially, 'the third drawer' refers to an overlooked compartment in which items with or without purpose find

their home. In the gallery context it becomes a term that explores a collective consciousness where fragments of experiences, memories, and ideas are collected, influencing everyday perceptions and behaviours. In a sense, the third drawer could be seen as a metaphor for what we store-away after our fragmented screen-time social interactions. What Jahovic has been able to do here is divulge the absurdity of this, the beauty of the mundane, and the humour in objecthood. The artist acknowledges that although "the works [in the exhibition] are conceptually different, their underlying domestic quality is still strong. I wanted to tidy them together in a 'drawer' that people could empathise with." This feeling is what makes the works on show approachable – breaking through the stereotypical sterile backdrop of white walls to release the life of each object into the space.

Ropes lovingly tied to the arms of a spinning household fan, dancing in mid-air like a bulbous yoyo.

A shoe madly tapping away whilst pirouetting on a concrete floor, as instructed by a strand of string strapped to the arm of a screwdriver fastened to a stool.

The lulling of a pillow, drunk on a chair as it stretches out from a taut thread to reveal the softness of the feathers inside it.

A dress-shirt twisting and spinning around a stick as it's led arm-in-arm by a length of weighted rope.

An electric whisk in chaos, trapped on a tabletop, infuriated by a ball of yarn it's unable to shake from its grasp.

The liquid wave-like motion of spoons trapped as they hang in an orderly fashion in the gaps of a naked ironing board.

Unified holes puncturing objects of domesticity, boldly removing any of their function and leaving transparencies.

These are just some of the ways that the objects on display extend into the world – given motion, they bare their beauty and are able to interact in dialogue with each other. One can't help but smile when witnessing these animated moments. Prompted by Jahovic, we can reflect on how we are "so often consumed by the digital world that we neglect the importance of tangible experiences. *The Third Drawer* seeks to remind us of the delights that can be found in the everyday."

The shirt that's being led around a pole is, in and of itself, weightless and free in a way that it could never be when worn on the shoulders of a human body. Typically, it's





the body that animates the shirt, whereas in Jahovic's piece, the shirt and the objects it interacts with are brought to life by themselves. These are interactions between items that we may have lost our ability to appreciate. Reconnecting to this poetic, childlike relationship to things brings a sense of pure joy. A naïve interpretation of how objects work by projecting personalities onto them in order to make sense of their use, underpins most of Jahovic's artistic decisions; she recognises that "[children] are seeing the same things, but it's very magical; they try to make sense of it, but it's more like a dream."

Influenced by artists like Rebecca Horn, Fischli/Weiss, Matthew Barney, and David Lynch, makes it easy to understand how the foundational concepts of bodies and objects, world building, and the mechanics of everyday life have built up in Jahovic's own practice. That the nuances and traits of the objects she engages with get transferred to the human form is refreshingly uncanny and even humorously relatable. Jahovic also cites Franz Kafka and Mikhail Bulgakov as two early Surrealist writers that have been a "mainstay" in her life and work, as she reflects on their "shared ability to blend the bizarre, the surreal, and the satirical to reflect and critique the societies they lived in."

The pleasure of Jahovic's works in *The Third Drawer* is in how each viewer projects new personalities onto the objects they are surrounded by. This exhibition also contains a series of photographed single objects – an apple, a motorcycle helmet, a kitchen sink, a tobacco pipe, all of them punctured with holes as if shot through or drilled out. The origin and meaning of these holes is left open to each visitor. Are they wounds, windows, or openings to memories? As Jahovic declares: "It is about rediscovering 'the forgotten' of our everyday lives – just like

@lisa_jahovic

That the nuances and traits of the objects she engages with get transferred to the human form is refreshingly uncanny and even humorously relatable. Jahovic also cites Franz Kafka and Mikhail Bulgakov as two early Surrealist writers that have been a "mainstay" in her life and work, as she reflects on their "shared ability to blend the bizarre, the surreal, and the satirical to reflect and critique the societies they lived in."

those small, often overlooked objects that we tuck away in drawers, imbued with memories and stories. It's a celebration of the tactile, the intimate, and the personal." <

The Third Drawer is at Flowers Gallery in London until 22 June 2024
flowersgallery.com