

Clayton, Eleanor, Review: Jesse Wine at BALTIC, Gateshead, The Skinny, March 2015

Three low plinths are stages for mobiles in the ground floor gallery of BALTIC, each holding accompanying props. These new works in *Young man red*, Jesse Wine's first institutional solo exhibition, seem very different from the tactile and experimental ceramics the artist has become known for (though some of the latter do pepper the installation). The mobiles composing the majority of the show form giant puppets of Wine himself; invisible figures created through suspended ceramic clothes and accessories. There is the artist at work, surrounded by ceramic blocks of clay visible through their unpeeled covering and tools. The detritus of a studio practice is rendered in glossy uniform colours alongside a rough circular pot glazed in slippery colours, here including ceramic dismembered hands at work. Elsewhere we see Wine at play, shown with an array of shoes, two included in the mobile as floating sartorial options, and a football. Facing the entrance, Wine is finally at rest with suspended pasta, a bottle and a cuppa. Despite their enormous sizes, these figures seem boyish. In part this is due to the mobiles' slight movements, which give a sense of exuberance, figures bounding about their daily business. The clothes surrounding the imagined bodies are small and childlike in bright primary colours; baseball caps topping two of the three figures similarly indicate youth. There is something endearing about this portrayal of an artist at work and play which conveys the joy of making found in Wine's previous work. There is wry humour too – the uniform colours of the clothes and props are created using commercial glazes applied exactly as per instructions; a departure from the experimental processes of his vessels. Here, the representation is commercial and massproduced, in contrast to the creations of the artist and his puppet proxy.

The mobiles relate to modernist art history, most prominently Alexander Calder, and further homages are found in the adjacent gallery where smaller sculptures directly re-work artists that Wine admires. However, acknowledging the ground floor gallery as the point of entry for the general public, Wine's use of mobiles also evokes puppetry to engage younger visitors, explaining this move towards figuration. Although Wine has previously shown conceptual inclinations within his ceramic practice, *Young man red* states this overtly, attuned to context and inventive. These are important qualities to notice in the rapidly expanding field of contemporary ceramics, relating the work to a history of installation and self-representation as well as the medium-specific lineages of studio pottery