

Serious and Slightly  
Funny Things  
*Francesca Fuchs*



Serious and Slightly  
Funny Things  
*Francesca Fuchs*

Art Museum of Southeast Texas  
*Beaumont, Texas*

December 18, 2021–March 13, 2022

# Descriptions

## *Francesca Fuchs*

### *Serious and Slightly Funny Things*

*Serious and Slightly Funny Things* is an exhibition of sixteen paintings and twenty-two objects at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas, on view from December 18, 2021 until March 13, 2022. The gallery space is 27 × 48-feet with an 8 × 16-foot entrance. The floor has 12 × 12-inch brown ceramic tiles with gray grout. The main space is divided into six sets of alcoves with protruding columns. The paintings on view were made during a period of two years from 2019 to 2021. The sculptures were made between 2016 and 2021. Each work tries to describe what a thing is and why it is important. There are paintings of paintings, paintings of sculptures, and sculptures of mugs and vases, which are also paintings in a way. *Serious and Slightly Funny Things* also includes words that are trying to describe these things: there is a text of descriptions written by the artist and an essay about memory written by Dean Daderko. The exhibition includes wall paint that blends the color of the brown tile floor to the off-white color of the wall in an ombre fade. There are also moments where the wall is painted a faint color behind a painting.

*Serious and Slightly Funny Things* tries to connect all these things into one big thing:

to put things together in mushes that may not want to connect.  
to make an earnest attempt to unground us.  
to make magic and give away the reveal at the same time.  
to walk the line between being nothing or being something.

In my paintings, in my objects, and in my words, I try to use the bluntest language to reveal what is felt, not seen, after all.

Every time I start a painting I feel like I have forgotten how to paint.

## *Acapulco Mug*

*Acapulco Mug* is a fired ceramic that is painted entirely with oil paint. The exterior of the mug shows an array of colorful folkloric flowers and plants and a blue bird. The inside of the mug is gray-white. The bottom of the mug is painted a darker gray and there is a shadow painted on the floor of the mug. When you hold the mug in your right hand you see a larger orange flower that has a yellow interior and a smaller violet flower with an orange center that looks like a 70s flower sticker. The stalks of the flowers have little petals that stick out to each side and they are surrounded by sheaves of leaves that are curled on themselves. The leaves are green, blue, red and orange. They have little circles surrounding them.

When you hold the mug in your right hand you also see the head and left side of the blue bird. The bird is opposite the handle. It has two wings and tail feathers that are painted blue with violet outlines. The bird has a little red crest at the back of its head. If you hold the mug in your left hand, you see two more flowers. The larger one is turquoise with small yellow corn shapes at the base of the petals and a bright red-orange interior. The smaller flower is yellow. There is another sheaf of leaves that is curled and curved in greens, blue, orange, and red. The mug was made by Villeroy & Boch in Germany. This particular mug was from the Acapulco series released in 1967 and in production through the early 90s. The pattern is influenced by Mexican folk art. I grew up with this mug in Germany.

## *Hera*

*Hera* shows a framed painting of a black and white drawing or print surrounded by a blue matte and an ochre frame. The drawing or print is of a figure in profile holding a scepter. It is painted in warm graytones on a desaturated light cream-gray ground. The figure is robed and holds a staff or scepter in their right hand and the folds of their robe in the left. The figure is standing on a round short pedestal. The hairdo or headdress has a peak above the face that feels like a crown. The painted matte is a desaturated blue and has a thin line of light yellow along all interior edges. There is a darker saturated blue along the top edge of the matte creating a small shadow under the frame.

The frame is painted a desaturated ochre which changes from reddish-brown in the bottom left to yellowish-white in the top right. There are thin dark lines painted in the corners to show the beveled edges of the frame. There is a quarter inch of white space outside the frame at the top and bottom edge of the painting. The figure feels ceremonial, but it also feels like it is guarding something. It feels like a person, but the pedestal implies it is a statue. It feels androgynous, but if you look closely, you can see there are breasts under the folds.

## *Reinhild B*

*Reinhild B* shows a drawing or print on a shaped horizontal rectangle. It is a light beige-orange. The bottom edge slants up on the lower left, the upper edge tapers down to the right almost unnoticeably. The matte or ground behind the rectangle is light gray. There is a darker line close to—but not touching—the edges of the canvas, on all sides. In the center of each line is a rounded rectangular tab indicating a simple glass frame. There are no painted reflections.

The print or drawing shows a dark fluid contour line of a goat and a reclining female form. The figure is leaning on or lying next to the goat and is recognizable as female because of the stretched legs and dark pubic area. The goat is filled with an area of brushy orange paint that does not quite conform to the contour line. The female figure has a brown undulating intestinal shape running through it. In the torso the brown is surrounded by amorphous areas of dark paint. There are two horn- or antenna-like protrusions.

A pastel blue-green blob is floating, flying, or somersaulting through the air in the upper right ground. The blue shape might have an arm and two orange dots for head and feet. The orange-beige substrate has some darker lines of desaturated orange-brown that converge toward the two figures like wrinkled sun-rays. *Reinhild B* was a high school friend of my sister's. There is a curly signature bottom right.

It seems strange that we accepted this Picassoesque vision of languid female nudes. I was envious of *Reinhild B*'s ease and fluidity of mark-making. She was the oldest of seven children.

## *Stack*

*Stack* shows a painted vertical sculpture on a very light neutral yellow-gray ground. The sculpture is made of seven to eight different shaped lumps that are stacked on top of each other. Like a leaning tower it lists slightly to the right. The base is rectangular, but most of the other shapes are irregular, some feel like beads and others like cut wedges. There is a larger triangular shape that juts out to the left somewhere around 'shoulder' height, visually counterbalancing the sculpture's lean to the right. The stack is painted orange and white with mint green areas. The paint in the sculpture looks like it was applied haphazardly. There are two dark spots above and below the larger 'shoulder' area. The stack feels figurative.

There is a faint blue-gray shadow shown directly to the right and behind the sculpture. It gives the stack a more human presence. The shadow feels figurative. There is a horizontal line dividing the yellow-gray ground. This division is about a quarter of the way from the bottom and intersects the stack close to the square base. The ground is almost the same color below and above the line. It shifts ever so slightly from a cooler light gray at the bottom to a more yellow-green light gray at the top. The ground is so very light that the painting's outermost edges of white are barely visible. The sculpture feels both sophisticated and extremely clumsy. You can see the brushstrokes in each of the surfaces. The paint is applied very thinly in the painting.

## *Blue Mug*

*Blue Mug* is made of fired clay that is painted with blue oil paint. The mug has a raised pattern close to the rim. There are five horizontal branch-like lines that have small round dots protruding below. The dots are where your thumb would go if you were touching the mug while holding the handle. They are raised and feel like you are reading the mug with touch. There are tiny raised tendrils that reach down from the horizontal branch to each dot. The raised lines and dots are a lighter and more greenish blue than the body of the mug, which is a very dark violet-blue that gets darker towards the bottom. The exterior and interior rims of the mug are also lighter. The mug is a little ungraceful even though it has a very fancy handle. The inside of the handle is shaped like an ear with a lobe. There is a flat spot at top of the handle where your thumb can counterbalance the weight of the mug. When you hold the mug in your hand by the handle it is fairly heavy. It is about as tall as the original mug, but wider and clumsier. The interior bottom is a dead dull Rothko brown that feels very dark against the blue. The actual mug is a little too decorative and ye-oldie. I haven't seen the mug for a while.

Maybe it broke.

## *Yellow Cup 1*

*Yellow Cup 1* is made of fired clay that is painted with yellow oil paint on the outside and grayish-white oil paint on the inside. The outside is a motley translucent yellow that has a tint of gray. The handle of the cup is white. The cup is definitely a cup, not a mug. It is not very large and feels a little dainty—like the kind of cup that would have a saucer. It tapers inward at an angle at the bottom edge towards a smaller circular base rim. The tapered area is painted a darker shade of gray-green yellow. There is a little warmth in the cool of the yellow. The rim of the cup is white and the inside of the cup is painted progressively darker shades of gray toward the bottom of its interior. There are two thin white circles in the base of the cup where the angles of the cup change direction. The interior of the cup feels like it is painted more thickly than the exterior.

*Yellow Cup 1* is one of two yellow cups. When you turn it upside-down, you see the letters FF in black in horizontally elongated geometric script. FF are my initials.

## *Mugs and Vases*

*Mugs and Vases* are a collection of mugs and vases made between 2016 and 2020. They include *Blue Mug* and *Yellow Cup 1*. They stand on a shelving unit. The mugs and vases cover the entire top surface. There are eighteen in total: three vases and fifteen mugs and cups. The shelving unit is a rough piece of furniture made of plywood. The top of the shelving unit is painted a warm mint to olive gray-green that is the same value as the plywood. The sides transition between color and wood in an over-sprayed fade.

## *Relief*

*Relief* shows a fragment of a relief sculpture on a light blue-gray ground. The relief is fairly large in the frame. There is an edge of light cyan blue at the bottom and sides and a small edge of darker blue-gray along the top. The sculpture is a desaturated brown-gray with cooler blue-gray areas that range in value. The relief is rectangular, almost square, but the bottom edge is broken and slants from bottom left upwards to the right. The width of the bottom edge is visible. On the relief is a head with a crown, long hair, and a beard, a lumpy nose and what might be closed eyes. We see the figure's arm raising a horn or glass diagonally. The horn touches the left edge of the relief fragment. To the right of the head is an undefined area that might be a column. Along the top are two darker cool-gray bands that frame the relief. The uppermost band has three raised decorative curves in even intervals. There is a cyan-gray shadow on the ground to the right of the relief. It is the same value as the darker blue-gray at the top of the painting although not quite the same hue. There is a half inch of white on the left and a quarter inch on the right side of the painting.

## *Biese 3*

*Biese 3* shows a four-color print on a light gray ground with rounded rectangular tabs painted in the middle of each edge. The print colors are dark gray almost black, a light warm ochre-gray, and small areas of aqua and red. The dark shapes show a seated figure center-right that appears to be waving or reaching to fix its hair. The figure has a round face and long neck. It has long wavy hair to the left of the neck. The eyes are ochre-green dots and the nose a slightly triangular line. There is no mouth. The ochre-green chin line is curved into a smile. The figure has a bare chest. The lines describing the breasts are flat. The fingers of the figure are stubby and rectangular. The feet are defined only by the rectangular indentations of toes.

There is a trapezoid of ochre-green negative space in the center of the painting, around which the composition rotates. The figure's raised arm, torso, and leg describe three sides of the trapezoid. The fourth side on the left is made by a dark half-moon plant. Behind, above, and below the figure and plant is a dark frame with cut ochre-gray lines indicating plants. There is a triangle of aqua in the top left corner and under the figure. There is a moment of red in the plant, the bottom right corner, and in two thin lines mid-right. The print is signed diagonally bottom left on the ochre gray: G. Biese. The G looks like an S. I know it is a G because I know the artist's name is Gerth Biese.

According to the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gerth Biese was German, born in Karlsruhe, Germany 1901 and died in Tübingen, Germany 1980. He seems to have prints in many collections. He lived and taught at the university in Tübingen like my father. I always thought of his work as being very influenced by Picasso. According to Wikipedia, his work was proclaimed degenerate art (Entartete Kunst) in 1932 by the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. I did not know that.



## *Totem*

*Totem* shows a vertical rectangular sculpture with two heads, one on top of the other. The sculpture is a warm gray and the ground is much the same value with a touch more cyan-yellow. The sculpture is boxy. It has rounded corners and a central protruding cylinder with three ledges. The faces are painted on the cylinder with dark lines. The topmost ledge is turned into a boxy hat with a black flat bobble. Under it is the first head. The eyes are semicircular lines that touch the protruding ledge. The pupils are dark half-moons. There is a faint gray shadow that falls halfway over the eyes, making them look shady. The nose is a rounded square with two holes for nostrils like an outlet or a pig snout. The mouth is a downturned semi-circle with a grill-like row of vertical lines. The ears are small semi-circular lines on the flat areas on either side of the cylinder. The head feels like it is clenching its teeth. The face is sandwiched between the boxy hat at the top and a similar boxy area that cuts off the teeth below. This lower protrusion serves both as shoulders for the top figure and a block-shaped hat for the lower figure.

The lower figure's eyes are almond shaped and have dark irises that only touch the upper line. The eyes look tired or exasperated. There is no nose. There is a dark circle for a mouth. The cylinder tapers below the mouth into a neck. The head might be singing or calling out. This head has big jug-handle ears on the flat areas either side. Below the neck is another boxy protrusion that becomes the lower head's shoulders. There is another tiny face drawn under this ledge. It could be a Día de los Muertos skeleton or a very small round face with a neck scarf and a giant hat.

## *Knee*

*Knee* shows a lumpy joint-like object in the middle of the canvas. It leans slightly backwards and diagonally to the right. It is light-colored and depicted in a range of shades of light gray from warmish faintly yellow-orange grays to cool cyan- and dark purplish-grays. The background is painted in similar tones of shifting gray. At first glance the entire painting looks like it is made of the value scale of one cyan-gray color. The changes in coloration are very subtle. There is a horizontal divide in the background about a third of the way up. The upper area is a darker cyan-gray, the lower area is lighter. The knee throws a shadow to the right on the ground and the wall.

The object appears to be a fragment—it is shown to have irregular edges top and bottom. It is turned slightly to the right. There is a seam running up the center of the knee with a raised elongated lozenge-shape protruding in the middle of the rounded kneecap. I imagine the lozenge is part of the mold that was not chased after casting this object in plaster. It is a little mysterious.

The knee could almost be a human knee, but it tapers inward too sharply above the joint and in profile the kneecap protrudes too far. I do not know which animal's knee this is.

## *Painted Rock (yellow and green)*

*Painted Rock (yellow and green)* shows a light colored lumpy triangular-shaped rock on a dark gray-blue ground. The rock is painted. It has two cool-yellow circular lines—the one at the top appears to be circling the upper knob of the rock. The other yellow line makes an almost full circle around a pastel green dot in the center of the rock's wider base. The yellow line is fuller at the top and tapers toward each end. It is a quarter inch thick at the widest point on the rock (on the rock, not the painting). The value of the yellow is almost the same as the value of the rock, which is a warm neutral. The pastel green dot is the same value as the darker areas of the rock. The yellow circle and pastel green dot are in the center of the canvas. When you squint at the rock both the yellow and green disappear. The rock is lumpy but smooth. Like a potato. It is pale, but also alluring. You want to touch it.

The rock is positioned closer to the top than bottom in the painting. There is a small dark semi-circular shadow right under the front edge of the rock and a much larger and lighter U-shaped shadow extending down toward the front left. The blue-gray ground is a little more violet on the left and more purplish-green on the right. You can see the brush marks in the ground. The actual rock is about four inches long and it is less triangular than in the painting. It fills your hand with smooth weight and surface. There is a perfect space for your thumb when you hold it in your right hand. The rock has a second pastel green dot which is at the top of the triangular knob. You can't see it in the painting, but it is there.

## *Hadrian*

*Hadrian* shows a sculpture of a face mounted on a pole which is mounted to a brown or burnished square base. The base has a larger bottom square and a smaller top square. The face is a fragment—what remains is the front of the face which is broken below the lips, but shows part of the jaw on the right side of the mouth, the figure's left. The brow is furrowed and the hair is curled in undulating rounded shapes. The eyes look stern and sad. The nose is chipped below the bridge but we still see the nostril holes. The lip area is described by two dark lines that also look like a moustache. The head is painted a cream gray-brown with hues moving between a bluish gray and a desaturated red-brown. There is a darker shadow on the right side behind the cheekbone. The eyes are blank, but there is a sense of a forward stare. The iris is indicated with an ever-so-slightly-darker circular shape. The pole connecting the head to the base is painted to look like brass. It has a thin line of brown on the left, a thicker line of yellow in the center and an equal line of brown on the right. There is a small dark triangle at the top of the second brown where the head is throwing a shadow. The brass base sits on a ledge or shelf surface that has a white front edge and a purplish-gray top ledge. There is a slightly darker gray shape beneath the ledge, possibly a bracket. The wall behind the fragment is a warm white. The head throws a shadow to the right of the sculpture. It is the same height as the head and curves a little lower. The pole throws a shadow as well, about two inches to the right of the actual pole. The background has a triangular wedge of cyan-gray in the top right corner. There is an unpainted area of white at the top edge of the canvas and a smaller area at the bottom. The actual sculpture is life-size, but it is shown a little larger than life in the painting.

The head looks like my father.

## *Candlestick*

*Candlestick* shows a squat blue ceramic handmade object in the center of a light-gray vertical ground. It is painted brushily to look like glazed blue ceramic. There is a dark blue, almost black, hole in the center of the top of the object. The hole is not round, but kidney or heart shaped. It is in the center of the canvas. There are four fat flower-like petals that cup out sideways from the hole. The petals are thick and a little clunky. Each petal has an oval decoration at its tip. The candlestick is painted varying blues. It is mostly a warm ultramarine. The shadow areas are a desaturated blue-violet with undertones of red and blue-green. The lighter areas are cyan-blue. The candlestick narrows in the middle and then widens again as a cone. There are some darker decorative markings incised in the body of the cone.

The ground is painted the same light gray all over. There is a darker horizontal line dividing the upper and lower ground areas just below center. It slants slightly downward to the right. The line intersects the candlestick at its narrowest point. The candlestick throws a gray-violet shadow onto the floor and wall directly to the right. The shadow on the wall is taller than the candlestick. There is a very faint blue-gray semi-circular shadow in front of the candlestick's lower edge. When you turn the candlestick over it has the initials O.F. scraped into it. And a 5. And two faint stars.

## *Ladybug Rock*

*Ladybug Rock* shows a flattish, oval stone in the center of the canvas that is painted like a ladybug or a ladybird. The oval stone is softly pointed toward the upper left. The pointed area is painted to look like the head in a dark-purplish-gray that feels like black. A thick dark line made with a big brush pulls down the middle of the rock from left to lower right dividing it into two wings. The wings are painted red. The red is a more intense scarlet-red at the front left edge. The red at the upper right is a duller desaturated maroon-brown. There are fairly large irregular black spots on both wings. There are seven spots on the upper wing, although four of the spots connect into two double spots making five spots really. There are seven spots on the lower wing. The side of the rock is very narrow. There is a little chip in the red paint at the front edge revealing the gray of the rock. The ladybug rock does not feel shiny but there is a white reflection painted to the left of the chip. You can see all brushstrokes.

The ladybird is centered diagonally sideways in a neutral light-gray ground. There is a horizontal line drawn above the ladybug. The gray above the line looks the same as the gray below. It might be ever so slightly darker. The line is drawn with what appears to be two strokes and gets wider and easier toward the right. The ladybird rock throws two shadows. The main shadow is bluish-gray and directly to the right, in line with the top and bottom edge of the ladybird. There is a second faint shadow in front of the ladybird. There is a half inch of white on the left and the right sides of the painting. I painted the actual ladybird rock in the 1970s. The spots were applied by dot-dot-dotting the tip of a brush. They are not careful. When you turn the rock over it is painted orangey-brown on the underside. It sits nicely in the palm of an adult hand and would make a great skipping stone.

## *Buddha*

*Buddha* shows a green-gray rock in the center of a neutral warm to light gray-green ground. The rock has scrape marks and cut marks in its surface. The rock feels rough and faceted, except for a rounded area that describes the shoulder and a smooth round head that protrudes at the top. The head is tilted upward and backward a little. We see it more from its left side. The round face has a darker green rounded spot on the forehead and below the mouth. These spots are darker markings in the stone. The eyes and nose and lips are carved very roughly. The eyes are shown as two darker green-gray almonds, the nose a flattish rectangle, the mouth an oval with a line. There are vertical shapes of lighter and darker green pulling through the head that feel like striations in the rock. The rock throws a shadow on the wall behind and to the right that is as tall as the figure. There is a second lighter shadow echoing the first like a gradating sideways halo. The body has no defined arms or legs. There is a slightly darker line that may indicate a right arm, but it may just be a fissure in the rock. The body is one whole part of undefined rock. It feels like it is hewn in place like a mountain, tilting back a little.

## *Diner Mug*

*Diner Mug* is shaped like a classic diner mug. The sides are very thick and the body is concave in a slight inward curve between the top lip and the bottom edge of the mug. *Diner Mug* is made of fired clay and painted thickly in light gray-green oil paint both inside and out. The outside of the mug has speckles of darker gray that feel like they are applied with the tip of a brush both randomly and carefully. There is a neatly painted dark green line circling the mug a quarter of an inch below its full round lip. There is a slimmer circle of dark green painted around the base of the mug just below its outermost curve. The mug's handle is thick. It has a painted green line running vertically in the middle of the handle. This green line is rounder and fuller at the top like the beginning of a single brushstroke. This line is only on the most rounded area of the handle. You can't see it when you look down at the mug.

There is a gray shadow painted between the attached handles on the body of the mug. The paint is laid thickly in the orientation of the contours, sideways around the mug and vertically on the handle. The interior of the mug is darker toward the bottom. The interior paint feels like it is painted more thickly than the exterior. There are a few more flecks of dark gray painted in the inside base of the mug. *Diner Mug* is weighty in your hand. It is satisfyingly grounding.

## *To Make A Change You Have To*

*To Make A Change You Have To* shows a white wood board with the words *To Make A Change You Have To* written on it in dark gray paint. There are subtle gray vertical lines on the light-gray colored ground, painted to look like the small cracks in a painted wood board. There are three very faintly painted horizontal lines in a lighter gray that look like the pencil guide lines for the letters. The words in each row are more or less centered. All the letters are capitalized and they slant slightly to the right. They touch the guide line at the bottom, but have different heights at the top. 'To Make A' are the letters on the first line. The A makes a little curlicue on the lower left. The K projects upwards the most, with the o the smallest letter. 'Change You Have' is shown on the second line. There is a small mark that could be a full stop after the word change, but I think it was a hole. The top right of the letter N has a curlicue also. 'To' is on the third line by itself. This third guide line is exactly halfway on the painted board. The word 'To' is in the center of the line. It is in the center of the canvas and there is a full stop after it. The space under the word 'To' and the full stop is empty.

The actual painting was made by Finis Delaney Wesley Turner aka WET. He was a sign painter that lived in Acres Homes. Jack Massing and Jay Wehnert arranged a show of his work at Bill's Junk. I bought this painting out of the show. I look at it every day. The actual sign is much better than my painting of it.

## *Hoof*

*Hoof* shows a painting of a sculpture. The entire painting is a creamy bluish-gray. The object is shown in the center vertically. It looks like a fragment of a sculpture: a light gray hoof with a cleave and part of the leg. The hoof is turned in semi-profile and leans to the right. There is a line that runs from the cleave up the center of the object. The right side of the hoof is in shadow and painted gray-purple with undertones of ochre. There is a painted horizontal line dividing the ground about a third of the way up. It intersects the hoof close to the bottom. The ground is whitish-gray, the wall a slightly darker blue-gray. There is a shadow to the right of the sculpture that falls diagonally on the ground and vertically up the wall. The shadow is about as tall as the hoof and has a darker cyan-gray core.

The actual object is cast plaster and as big as a wrist. The line up the center is what is left of the casting seam. I imagine it is a fragment of a Hellenistic sculpture. I always thought it was a horse's hoof.

## *M Schmid*

*M Schmid* shows a semi-abstract painting in a gray-white frame. The picture is a gestural painting of a vase with flowers or maybe a pot with paint brushes in a range of brushy gray tones from almost black to light gray. The grays shift from blue-gray to brown-gray. The vase or pot is in the center close to the bottom edge and the flowers or brushes almost touch the top edge. The vase is painted a desaturated salmon-orange ground color and has wide almost white brushstrokes describing the vase's contour: straight on the left with a curve top right. The vase has three similarly wide interior vertical lines and one horizontal line. The flowers or brushes are loopy spoon-like ovals. They have wide outer lines and interior ovals of a darker shade of gray. There are a few moments of very desaturated salmon-pink behind the flowers or brushes. The ground to the side of the vase is painted varying abstract shapes of light to dark gray. The tonality and size echo the flower vase. On the left, they follow the bottom corner with a dark stroke on the outer edge and a white stroke along the bottom. The painting is carefully painted to look like it is filled with expressive brushstrokes. The paint is very thin.

M Schmid was a friend of my father's in Tübingen. His wife would drive us to Kindermusik. We once had an accident in her car and the back of the car would no longer close. We drove home with the boot open. This painting was in my bedroom after my sister moved out. We made two small bedrooms into one room with an arch. I painted the walls a warm yellow. The painting is now in my sister's living room. It has white walls.

This painting was to me the epitome of an artist's painting.

## *Turquoise Vase*

*Turquoise Vase* is a vase with a pear-shaped body and a tall neck. The neck flares slightly at the lip. *Turquoise Vase* is painted varying shades of blue-green in thick oil paint. The blue-green oil paint is lighter on the upper bulb of the body and darker on the underside. The rim of the vase is white and the inside of the neck is a very dark gray-blue-green. You cannot see to the bottom of *Turquoise Vase*, just part way down the neck. *Turquoise Vase* is on a shelf to the left of *Reclining Woman*. The shelf is painted white and  $3\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  inches. It is screwed into the wall so the shelf aligns with the lower edge of the painting and about five inches to the left. The turquoise vase makes a triangle with the head and the end of the legs of the painted sculpture in the painting.

## *Reclining Woman*

*Reclining Woman* shows a sculpture of a woman in the center of the canvas. The sculpture is painted cream-gray to ochre-yellow. The figure's legs are stretched forward horizontally and the torso is curled on itself. The arms are cradled and the head rests downward on the upper left arm with the figure's right hand making a ledge just below the head. The figure is nude, we see the breast shapes and dark lines describing the pubic triangle. There are no nipples or hair. The stretched legs are semi-crossed at the knee. There are no feet. The legs end in a small, flattened area. The head is a smooth horizontal oval. There is one large almond-shaped eye described with two incised lines and a similar set of lines for the mouth. There is no nose and no second eye.

The head is dropped at an almost impossible angle onto the shoulder. The figure's hair makes a second circumference around the oval face and comes to a curved triangle wave at the top of the head. You can see the marks of the tool that worked the light fired clay of this sculpture in linear movements along the thighs, calves, and arms. They are shown with brownish and whitish lines of paint. The figure is on a light gray ground that looks neutral, but shifts from cream to purplish-gray. The ground is divided horizontally. The upper area is a slightly darker shade of gray than the lower area. This division intersects the figure at the upper torso. There is a faint shadow on the ground and wall behind the figure. A darker shadow underneath the front of the sculpture hugs the bottom, lower right thigh and calf in a semi-circle that points in at the knee and then moves downward diagonally along the calf.

The sculpture was probably made by a friend of my father's in the 50s or 60s. I suspect it was made by Martin Schmid or Karl Richter, but there are no initials or marks on the underside.



*Painted Rock (yellow/green)*, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
25 × 18 ¾ inches





*Hera*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
32 × 23 inches

*Acapulco Mug*, 2021  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ½ x 4 ½ x 3 ¼ inches



*Turquoise Vase*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
8 ½ × 4 ¼ × 4 ¼ inches

*Pink Vase*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
6 × 3 ¼ × 5 ¼ inches

*Spotted Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ¾ × 5 × 3 ½ inches



*Diner Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 5 × 3 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches



*Stack*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas  
47 × 30 inches

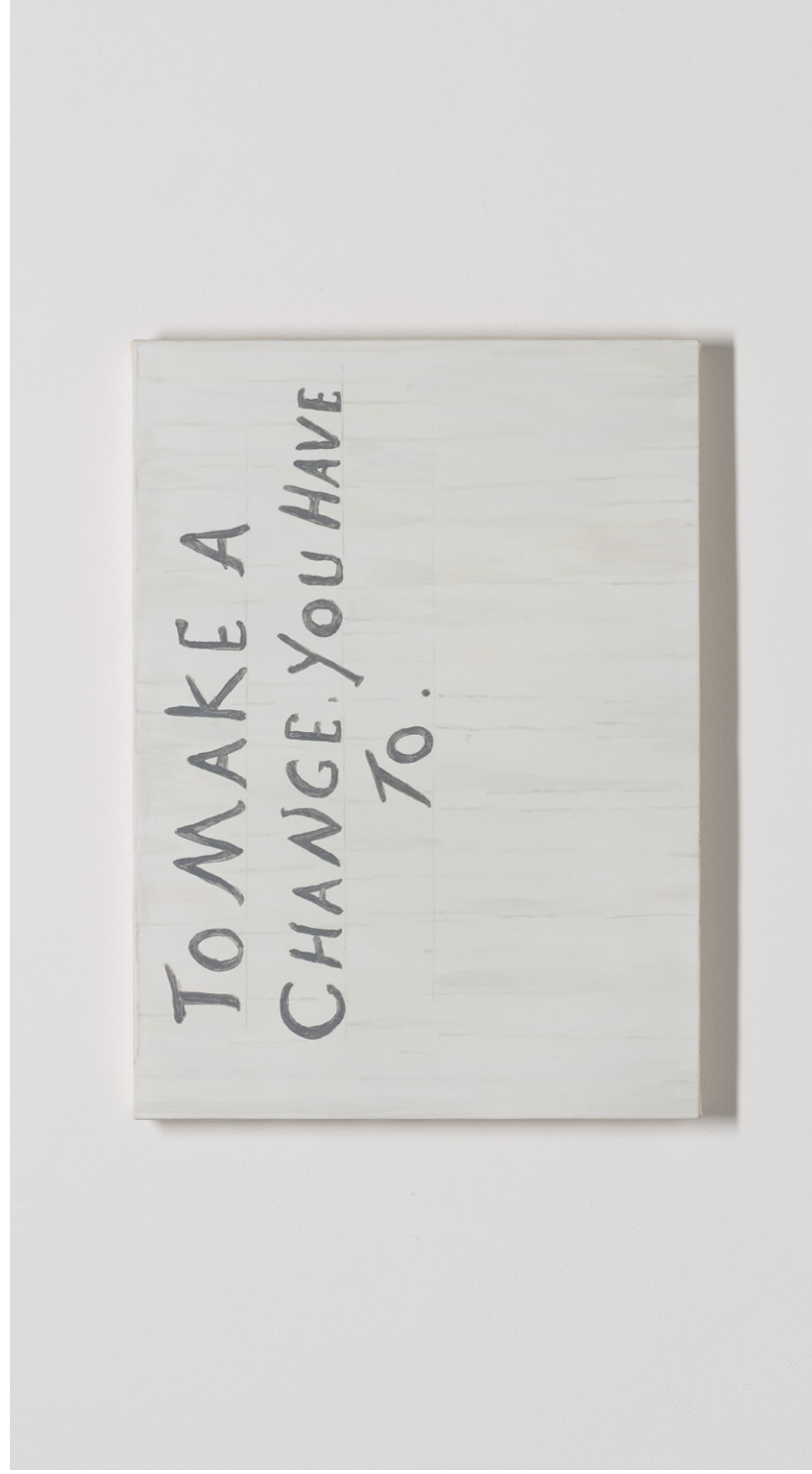




*Hadrian*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
29 ½ × 21 inches



*Candlestick*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas  
31 × 23 ½ inches





*Reclining Woman*, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
30 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 40 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches



Installation View  
*Serious and Slightly Funny Things*  
Art Museum of Southeast Texas



Installation View  
*Serious and Slightly Funny Things*  
Art Museum of Southeast Texas



## *Contents*

2	Descriptions <i>Francesca Fuchs</i>
26	Works
54	The Careful Practice of Attention <i>Dean Daderko</i>
64	Checklist
66	Biographies and Acknowledgements
68	Credits

# The Careful Practice of Attention

*Dean Daderko*

It's fitting that this essay on Francesca Fuchs' work would begin with a memory exercise. My memory is faulty and imperfect. Time and distance soften sharp edges and mute any crystal-clarity as I attempt to recall her work. I find myself conjuring idealized pictures, and coloring them in as best I can. Fuchs' work treads in this very territory: though memory is fallible and evanescent, her paintings render it concrete and evidentiary. Through painting, she teases out the full emotional potential that resides in objects and images.

The first show of hers I saw is *(Re)Collection: Paintings of Framed Paintings, Drawings, Prints & Photos* at Texas Gallery in Houston in 2013. Truth be told, I remembered the show's title as *Paintings*.

I remember walking over the dark gray foyer carpet towards the honey-colored wooden floors of the high-ceilinged gallery space. I was in awe of a wall of paintings—forty or so—hung salon style. The rectangular composition of all of the artworks together must have measured around thirty-feet long and ten- or twelve-feet high. The paintings were washed in a rectangle of warm light, with shadows softening the walls and ceiling. The other gallery walls must have been blank. Discrete pools of light illuminated the floor.

I sensed the air in the space, as though the room was filled with chalk dust. Fuchs' paintings were paintings-of-paintings and etchings and silkscreens that she'd lived

with over the course of her life. I remember walking along the wall, my attention pulled from one work to another. None of these artworks were immediately recognizable to me, but all of them struck me as familiar. They were the kind of art I'd seen on walls in friends' homes and thrift shops. They felt cherished, not least because of the obvious care Fuchs had taken in painting them, recreating each one with care. I understood innately that some of her reproductions were paintings, and that others were based on silkscreens or etchings. That I felt I understood the materiality of their sources seemed like a considerable feat on Fuchs' part, not least because all of the images I was seeing were acrylic paintings on canvas. Modestly-scaled, they were the kind of artworks one could tuck under an arm to transport. I saw landscapes, abstractions, and still lifes—all the familiar genres. A material consistency united the paintings; they were all part of a family that shared common traits in color, tone, and brushwork. Perhaps the chalky air I sensed was Fuchs' deft hand translating pigment and gesture into images that felt plucked from the depths of memory.

I remember a painting of a steam-powered paddlewheel boat on a blue river with a blank sky. I remember a still life of four or five dead fish, flopped over each other in a low, slippery pile. I remember a geometric abstraction of twisting, interconnected brown and tan lines that looked like a vertical braid of light with a 70s funk vibe. I have a fuzzier memory of an architectural folly: a wall, overgrown with trees and vines, with an arched doorway punched

through it. I don't remember what was beyond the passage, but I did think that what I was seeing must have originally been a black-and-white etching. I have a vague memory of pink flowers and green sea shells reminiscent of one of Max Ernst's *Fleurs Coquillages* that could have also been oyster shells and dogwood buds. One work made me recall early Agnes Martin abstraction. I remember abstract shapes. I think I remember a painting of a house. I wouldn't be surprised if you told me there was a portrait or two in the mix. Past this, my vision blurs.

I remember that Fuchs' "reproductions" included frames she'd painted with the same care she took to recreate the remembered artworks. Frames mediate: they slow down entry into images. Here, they offered distinct outlines to the edges of memories. I don't remember any metallic paint, but I understood some frames she had recreated were gold. I recall a painted green matte board in one work; there were likely some white matte boards too. I'd guess the majority of the works were framed behind glass, though painted reflections weren't made apparent in Fuchs' brushwork. Some outlines replicated wooden strip frames—the kind nailed into the canvas's edge with brads. I want to remember a delicately wavering line in deep gray depicting the shadow between a wooden frame and one canvas's edge.

Francesca Fuchs paints the texture of memory. Her extraordinary use of her medium is the result of decades of dedicated practice. She's a careful observer, and her

paintings are emotional translations. The memories she paints are hers, but her pictures are meant for us. Since she records things as she remembers them, it's fitting that her color palette is hazy, like colors seen through fog or in a sun-bleached snapshot. She's not aiming for accurate representation, but something that "feels right." There's none of the shock of straight-from-the-tube color in the palette she uses. Fuchs' color is mellow and toned down. Tints and grays abound, but they're lush, scumbled together, and applied wet-into-wet. I imagine her paint being the consistency of heavy cream. Her pigment disperses in semi-transparent layers, and once it's dried, her painted surfaces lack tooth; the paint slips over the surface and congeals richly.

Fuchs' works convey the visual impression that we're looking through a veil or haze, but they simultaneously appear precisely rendered. Fuchs renders the feeling of memory's imprecision with precision. Yet, as curator and historian Laura August has noted, when Fuchs sources an original, she's looking very closely at it, with no space in her process for imprecise remembering. Fuchs refers to her process—which begins when an object is photographed and sketched before being painted—as "steps in translation." Each subsequent act of mediation provides distance from the original physical object, while Fuchs investigates the item's emotional poignance. As viewers, we're brought to consider the difference between object and perception, and to recognize the qualities that make a rendering feel fallible or accurate. It's within this

subjective interpretive space that Fuchs' work flowers. As she renders remembered objects, a physical and mental distance from the original grows and becomes layered. It's like looking at ourselves in a foggy mirror: we know ourselves so well that we don't need sharp focus to see clearly. More precisely, Fuchs teaches us about looking as much as the act of looking, offering new ways to picture the passage of time and temporality. Fuchs isn't making precise and realistic copies of pictures she's lived with or near; she's painting them as she remembers them. She's developing impressions.

A canvas' reception hinges on its maker's ability to manipulate her medium to communicate ideas or feelings. Fuchs' brushstrokes are loaded with emotion. Her material prowess with paint is matched by a convincing conceptual approach. Fuchs closely attends to the nature of objects and their ability to harbor emotional resonance. The items she depicts are decidedly personal, but we can perceive their energetic importance.

The emotional poignancy of objects that comes from focused looking is apparent in Fuchs' series *Dead Dad Desk*. Among the most intimate paintings she's made, these record the items found on the desk of her father—he was an antiquities scholar—after his passing. Presented at Inman Gallery in 2018, the titles of several objects convey a quotidian administrative nature: *Bookend*, *Calendar*, *Desk Lamp*, *Letter Opener*, *Letter Rack*, *Magnifying Glass*, *Notebook*, *Paperweight*, *Pen Holder*, *Pointer Pen*, *Scissors*,

*Telephone, and Tape Dispenser.* The paintings *Cigarette Case, Cigarette Holder, Coaster, and Necktie* begin to suggest the elder Fuchs' human presence. *Flint, Green Crystal, Round Stone, and Shard* speak to his individual interests. What might have drawn him to these stones and this pot shard? Were his attractions material? Rational? Magical? Did he—like we might, looking at his daughter's paintings—imagine an ability to connect with someone, to attempt to understand them through items they held dear?

Each painting in the series isolates a single one of her father's possessions atop his desk. There's no clutter; objects are recorded one-at-a-time, and their presentation feels ceremonial. By touching these things, by ritually recording them, might Fuchs have been processing her loss? These items maintain a connection: a loss allayed through an object. I remember the painter Stanley Whitney telling me that you're not really dead until nobody remembers you anymore. Perhaps caring for someone's things is a way to keep their memory alive. Fuchs understands this, and she does it.

After remembering comes the impetus to record the memory so it can be shared. Audre Lorde said "poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought." Fuchs' work offers a visual analogue. Her attention to the vast spectrum of objecthood has lately manifested in sculptures that propel her paintings into three-dimensional space. Where two-dimensional paintings and prints once—and still—spurred the artist to create

painted likenesses, utilitarian objects like cups, mugs, and flower vases now also draw the artist's attention.

Her recent solo exhibition *Painting and Mugs* at Talley Dunn Gallery in 2020 grouped paintings and sculptures into constellations. The objects that received her attention included a painting of a round rock that had itself been painted to resemble a ladybug; a painting of a framed print depicting the interior of the Pantheon; and paintings of fragments of marble reliefs and sculptures. Exhibited alongside these paintings are Fuchs' painterly copies of cups, mugs, and small flower vases whose matte, textured surfaces contrast the unctuous surfaces of her two-dimensional works. They invite us in to take a closer look, nearly asking to be touched. Her choice to reproduce unremarkable quotidian items sidesteps the canonical designation of "masterpiece" in favor of personal, emotional resonance. She renders these everyday items remarkable with her touch and attention. Her appreciations are equally wide-ranging: Fuchs derives as much pleasure from a clay sculpture carved and painted by a kid as she does from an archaic marble bust of the Roman emperor Hadrian. Her joy is expansive.

Cups and mugs being the type of objects we use every day, it's no surprise that we develop intimate attachments to particular ones, or that Fuchs would recognize and draw on this connection. Who hasn't become possessive of a certain cup or mug from which to drink our morning coffee or tea? These vessels accompany our private rituals—the



ways we greet the morning—and their familiarity offers gentle consolation.

As I write, two teacups sit on the desk before me. One comes from Fuchs' home kitchen. It's porcelain, and its exterior is glassy with a bright and cheery mimosa yellow glaze. Its ear-shaped handle is thin, but not too delicate; I doubt it could easily be snapped. The handle bows out before reattaching above a beveled-in base. Flip the cup over, and a stamp appears on the bottom: © FF. The copyright and initials identify the teacup as part of the La Ronde tableware line by the Dallas, Texas-based company Fitz & Floyd, produced in the 1960s. That the cup bears initials shared by the artist is a notable coincidence, as though it entered into her life already signed; perhaps it chose her.

The second object in front of me is also a ceramic cup. Ostensibly, it's a copy of the first, but its differences are notable. The yellow is lighter and less declarative. Tinged with gray, it skews towards acidic chartreuse. The surface isn't glassy either: The brushwork clearly visible on it has a painterly texture, as though it was built up stroke by stroke: a three-dimensional painting. This cup's handle is meatier, and its curve is broader. The handle is white, like the interior. By comparison though, this cup's white is a dirtier, hazier white. Peering into its depths, I encounter an optical conundrum: while the cup's bottom is naturally thrown into shadow, Fuchs has painted in an observed shadow. Hers is an almost imperceptible gray, making it

difficult to understand where real and painted shadows elide. Fuchs systematically mines this space between the visible and the imperceptible, exposing its emotional potential through paint.

Fuchs' investigations of the power of objects—how they can please us materially and aesthetically, connect us with those that held them dear, and act to conjure memory and emotion—is matched by her commitment to understanding how painting facilitates these connections. Her images—whether two or three dimensional—are the result of a careful practice of attention. Brushstroke by brushstroke, Fuchs takes time to look and think closely as she renders objects in paint. What emotions will a particular tint or shade of color evoke? How do things connect us to other people? Fuchs slows down to look, paint, look again, think, sketch, edit, and hone in on the meaning and meaningfulness of objects—whether they're cups, a pot shard, painted stones, or someone else's beloved painting or print. Fuchs thinks as she paints, and she thinks through painting. For the observant, Fuchs' work offers lessons on objecthood, materiality, and observation itself. With precise vision, she paints emotion into concrete reality. If we look carefully, openly, we'll see just what she's saying and feeling.

*Dean Daderko*  
*December 2021*

# Checklist

## Paintings

*Biese 3*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
18 ½ × 20 inches

*Buddha*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
42 × 29 ¼ inches

*Candlestick*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas  
31 × 23 ½ inches

*Hadrian*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
29 ½ × 21 inches

*Hera*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
32 × 23 inches

*Hoof*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas  
34 ⅝ × 24 inches

*Knee*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas  
34 ½ × 24 inches

*Ladybug*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas  
22 × 30 ¼ inches

*M. Schmid*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
34 × 24 inches

*Painted Rock (yellow/green)*, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
25 × 18 ¾ inches

*Reclining Woman*, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
30 ⅙ × 40 ¾ inches

*Reinbild B.*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
18 ½ × 25 inches

*Relief*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas  
19 × 25 ½ inches

*Stack*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas  
47 × 30 inches

*To Make a Change*, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
15 ⅙ × 20 ¾ inches

*Totem*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas  
43 × 26 inches

## Mugs and Vases

*Acapulco Mug*, 2021  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ½ × 4 ½ × 3 ¾ inches

*Blue Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ½ × 5 ⅝ × 4 ¼ inches

*Brown Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ¾ × 4 ½ × 3 ¼ inches

*Chipped Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ⅝ × 6 ⅝ × 5 inches

*Diner Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ¾ × 5 × 3 ⅝ inches

*Green Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ½ × 5 × 3 ¼ inches

*Green Vase*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
4 ½ × 4 × 4 inches

*Octagon Vase*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
8 ¼ × 3 ½ × 3 ½ inches

*Orange Vase*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
8 × 3 ⅞ × 3 ⅞ inches

*Putty Vase*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
4 × 3 ½ × 3 ½ inches

*Pink Vase*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
6 × 3 ¼ × 3 ¼ inches

*Red Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ¾ × 5 ½ × 4 inches

*Speckled Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ½ × 5 × 3 inches

*Spotted Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ¾ × 5 × 3 ½ inches

*Striped Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ⅞ × 6 ½ × 5 inches

*Turquoise Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ½ × 4 ¼ × 3 inches

*Turquoise Vase*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
8 ½ × 4 ¼ × 4 ¼ inches

*White Cup*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
2 ¾ × 5 ½ × 4 ½ inches

*White Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 ¼ × 6 ⅞ × 4 ⅝ inches

*Yellow Mug*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
4 × 5 ¼ × 3 ½ inches

*Yellow Cup 1*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
3 × 4 ½ × 3 ¼ inches

*Yellow Vase*, 2016–2020  
Fired clay and oil paint  
6 ½ × 2 ¾ × 2 ¾ inches

## Biographies

### *Francesca Fuchs*

Born in London and raised in Münster, Germany, Francesca Fuchs moved to the U.S. in 1996 for the Core Program at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Across her career, Fuchs' critique of 'importance' has unfolded in rethinking the dismissal of the small, the intimate, the feminine, and the beloved, insisting instead that these objects illuminate fundamental truths about our selves, our communities, and our histories. This attentiveness makes a significant and expansive critique of the modes with which we codify national, cultural, and aesthetic taste into seemingly unshakeable mythologies, identities, and histories. Fuchs' work has been shown in venues including The Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; The Suburban, Illinois; and in a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston. She was the 2017 Josephine Mercy Heathcote Fellow at the MacDowell Colony, New Hampshire, and Art League Houston's 2018 Texas Artist of the Year. Francesca Fuchs currently lives and works in Houston, Texas.

### *Dean Daderko*

Dean Daderko is a curator whose practice is guided by queer and feminist ethics. From 2010–2020, as a Curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, they presented exhibitions with LaToya Ruby Frazier, Joan Jonas, Paul Ramírez Jonas, Nicolas Moufarrege, MPA, Wu Tsang and Fred Moten, Gina Pane, Haegue Yang and others, often accompanied by new commissions. These exhibitions traveled to the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; and Queens Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City. Daderko's 2020 Curatorial Fellowship from the Étant donnés: The French–American Fund for Contemporary Art supported ongoing research on Claude Cahun and Bouchra Khalili.

## Acknowledgements

### *Francesca Fuchs*

I am so grateful to the team at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas, especially Lynn Castle, Sarah Beth Wilson, Mariah Rockefeller, and Caitlin Clay, who have been on this journey with me for an unexpectedly long period of time. Deepest thanks to Caitlin Clay and Dario Bucheli for making the final arrival a smooth one. Indeed, a big thanks to everyone at AMSET doing all visible and invisible work. I would also like to thank the Dora Maar Residency, Menerbes, France, for the invaluable quiet time and space in which to research, read, paint, and especially write in the summer of 2021.

I would like to thank Talley Dunn and the Talley Dunn Gallery team—the March 2020 exhibition *Painting and Mugs*, which was shuttered by the Covid-19 pandemic, is at the basis of *Serious and Slightly Funny Things*. I am deeply grateful for their ongoing support of the work and this publication. My deepest thanks to Kerry Inman and the Inman Gallery team for their support of my work and this publication.

I would like to thank Dean Daderko for our ongoing conversations over time in and out of the studio and their beautifully tactile observations and memories. Thank you to Amanda Thomas for the collaboration and vision in making this anecdote into a beautiful publication; she truly was my 'parachoute.' Always my huge thanks to Laura August, who supports crazy thoughts and helps edit the results. And to all the photographers who have made my work look beautiful despite the difficulty of photographing low-contrast things in high-contrast spaces: Thomas DuBrock, Kevin Todora, Paul Hester.

This exhibition is generously funded, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Texas Commission on the Arts, the Wesley W. Washburn, M.D. and Lulu L. Smith, M.D. Endowment Fund, the C. Homer and Edith Fuller Chambers Charitable Foundation, the City of Beaumont, and the members of the Art Museum of Southeast Texas. Additional funding provided by the Honorable Marcia and Walter “Seth” Crone.

To find out more about how National Endowment for the Arts grants impact individuals and communities, visit [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).

Funding for publication was provided by the Art Museum of Southeast Texas and their generous donors, with additional support from Kerry Inman and Inman Gallery, Talley Dunn and Talley Dunn Gallery.

First edition © 2022 Art  
Museum of Southeast Texas

Artwork: Francesca Fuchs  
© 2022 Francesca Fuchs

Published on the occasion  
of *Serious and Slightly Funny  
Things*, December 13, 2021–  
March 18, 2022

Photography: Thomas  
DuBrock, pp. 27–45  
© 2022 Thomas DuBrock

All rights reserved. No part  
of this publication may be  
produced without prior  
permission.

Photography: Paul Hester,  
pp. 47–48, 51  
© 2022 Paul Hester

ISBN 978-1-884192-13-5

Descriptions: Francesca Fuchs  
© 2022 Francesca Fuchs

Art Museum of Southeast Texas  
500 Main Street  
Beaumont, Texas 77701  
[amset.org](http://amset.org)

Essay: Dean Daderko  
© 2022 Dean Daderko

Inman Gallery  
3901 Main Street  
Houston, Texas 77002  
[inmangallery.com](http://inmangallery.com)

Editorial and Project Support:  
Laura August

Talley Dunn Gallery  
5020 Tracy Street  
Dallas, Texas 75205  
[talleydunn.com](http://talleydunn.com)

Design: Amanda Thomas  
  
Typeface: GT Alpina  
  
Paper: Accent Warm White  
80#T, Sterling Gloss 100#T  
  
Printed in the USA at  
DiscPro, Houston, Texas



