



# BARTLEBY REVIEW

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Upkeep ..... Maia Nichols

**Lara Favaretto**

*'Collected Works'*

*Rennie Collection at Wing Sang*

*51 East Pender St.*

*Through October 3*

Three blocks of confetti greet you. Lara Favaretto's *Village of the Damned* (2014) references the 1960 sci-fi film set in an English village inhabited by blonde, glowing-eyed children with powers that compel people to suicide. To block the children's telepathy, their professor visualizes a brick wall, effectively hiding his plan to drop a bomb on the building the children live in. *Village of the Damned* succeeds in formalizing mental compression, serving as a slight yet weighty gesture. The confetti blocks shed lamentably slowly, a silently oppressive reminder of our impermanence. Favaretto will recycle the confetti to create new pieces. Throughout her career, she revisits the same materials, repurposes found objects, and creates links informed by location. Air migrates and influences the structures, notably the one in

front of the door separating the entrance from the first gallery, which has bald patches, lumps missing.

*Twistle* (2003) also deals with air. Here, Favretto has prepared an ominous human-sized air tank, regimented and timed, to blow a silent party streamer. Inflating and deflating rhythmically, the dialogue between a heaving machine and a flimsy, replaceable streamer ultimately mocks the seriousness of the former.

*Fisting* (2012) is a sculpture that shows the impact of the artist's fist punching the top of a concrete plinth-like rectangular form. Visually reminiscent of digging into sand, she is crude, unapologetic, and violent. Inertia, the heaviness of the object (an evident hassle to ship), echoes the slow nature of progress, the stasis of political structures, amidst the fleeting gestures of the body.

Upstairs, you enter a room of car washers installed vertically in pairs; their cloth strips elevate and twirl almost touching each other and grazing pieces of metal mounted against the wall behind them. *Coppie Semplici/Simple Couples* (2009) seems democratic, even fun; a light-hearted study of characters reflecting us. The metal is harsh against the tenderness of the twirling bodies that are sometimes complacent and stopped, sometimes furiously spinning their wheels, forever chained to their liaisons. Soon, it becomes an aesthetic poesis of wear, as the

metal grates behind the washers show marks from their movement. This parallels the wearing down of the self through affiliations to others, and to the environmental substrate within which we are contained. The overwhelming darkness here is one of recognition, of familiarity with being trapped, caught within the mechanism.

On the floor, a glossy plaque that reads *Defense d'Entrer* (2012) is mounted over a small piece of African zebrawood of the same size. The small sculpture continues to function as it did when it was first exhibited, amidst European elections. Raising awareness of Europe's challenging interdependence with Africa, it is a marker for the cultural diplomacy of trade, immigration, and demographic changes in Europe which instilled conflicts around African migration and employment.

Visitors are not likely to step over the plaque to enter the corridor. This is likely another derisive jab at codes of public display, echoed further in Favaretto's *Lost & Found* (1998), which emerged from an interest in the state-run auctions of lost and found items from the Italian railway system. Here, Favaretto locks a suitcase and gets rid of the key. We don't know where it is from, or what's inside. Rennie's custodian moves the suitcase on a regular basis. This instruction taunts the monumental in systems of care, consequently stained by the artist's privilege.

**Maia Nichols**