

**Eduardo Navarro**  
**“Do Not Feed”**

Frederieke Taylor Gallery, 9/9 – 10/10, 2008

An aviary is an outdoor enclosure for birds. Inverting the norm, Eduardo Navarro has constructed one *inside* the gallery. It is made of discarded wood and chicken wire, yet its proportions and design are effortlessly elegant. (As the saying goes, you can take the man out of architecture, but you can't take the architect out of the man.)

The Shelter connects to an open window - an improbable yet sincere invitation to the birds to enter. They haven't, although Navarro has witnessed one alight momentarily on the wooden platform just inside the sill. Bagels not bird seed are incongruously scattered on the floor as though discarded after lunch snatched on a park bench, to be pecked at by pigeons and later scavenged by tramps or rats or, in London at least, by foxes. The aviary remains empty, but compels us to imagine some creature inside engaged in its migratory search for food. Navarro sets the stage for the viewer to complete the play.

The migratory search for sustenance is encapsulated in the job applications on the opposite wall. Once again inverting the norm, Navarro has laboriously copied by hand some fourteen printed forms – issued by Pizzahut, McDonalds, Starbucks and others in the food industry - and then used a silkscreen to mechanically apply his personal details and signature. The personal information is repeated again and again, emphasizing the vast number of applications necessary to secure one job as well as the way in which the individual is processed and de-personalized at the receiving end, one of thousands. Navarro describes it as the individual being “trapped” in the public structure of the form.

In another mechanical and laborious process, in the large work, *Ants and Glue*, Navarro has fixed, or similarly “trapped”, thousands of ants with glue on to paper. Ants are workers, relentlessly scurrying around searching for food to carry back to their nests to feed the colony and to store over winter. Yet we kill these seemingly insignificant tiny insects without a second thought. Navarro confronts us with 16,400 specimens, now impossible to ignore. He has killed them too, but consciously, identifying his aim, after the event, as paying homage to these conscientious workers whilst acknowledging his cruelty in sacrificing them for this purpose. In gluing them to the paper, Navarro permanently interrupts their ceaseless activity, as though naively awarding them a well-earned rest.

The final element of the show is a group of *Brown drawings*, made from sugared water on sheets of parchment or greaseproof paper that are baked in the oven. Navarro has been drawing since he was a child and still draws with a child-like spontaneity free of logic. He likens his drawings to haikus; brief poems that trigger sudden moments of understanding which connect the author with the reader. Ears emitting

smoke, a man with string in his brain that can be pulled from his mouth, a family of blobs, lungs connected to intestine: illogical universes that Navarro says obliquely represent various emotional states. And why baked sugar? Because Navarro began using sugar in 2006 to attract ants to use in his first ant-collages. Because sugar is an essential food. Because water with sugar is transparent, as is the paper, so that the success – or failure – of each drawing is only apparent when the baking is complete, a process over which Navarro has no control. In this way the brown drawings counter the repetition and rigidity of the ant collage and the job applications, and contain the poetry and invitation invoked in the aviary.

And as though an aside, a small collage is hung near the aviary; an assortment of debris – much of it consumable – glued to brown card (macaroni, corn flakes, a few peanuts, ears of corn, can openings, paper clips, matchsticks, a dead fly etc.). Navarro explained he was struck by a documentary that showed what was found in the stomachs of animals in a zoo, evidence of the items carelessly thrown into the cage. The collage is entitled *New Alphabet*, the artist once again tenderly bestowing significance to the otherwise overlooked.

Joanne Bernstein