

Libby Black at Heather Marx

For her first solo show, Libby Black presented a kind of 3-D, life-size “déjeuner sur l’herbe”—minus nature and people. Nearly filling the floor of

the small gallery was a champagne picnic spread out on a Burberry blanket and, nearby, a gold-rimmed canoe sporting Gucci’s new floral pattern. Everything in the two pieces—from the lobster, the Versace ice bucket, the Chanel picnic basket, the box of Fauchon chocolates, the Louis Vuitton lifejacket, to the kicked-off pair of red Prada sandals—was crafted by the artist out of paper and glue and then hand-painted down to the last bow and gold nailhead.

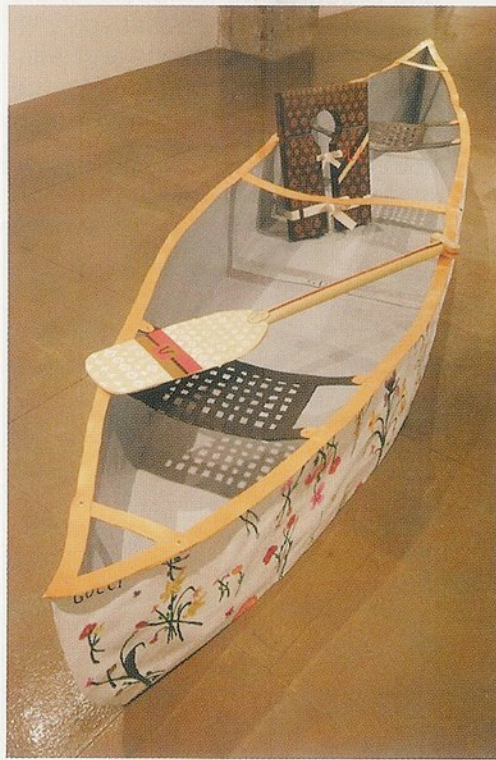
Surrounding this colorful, urbane idyll was a series of black-and-white graphite drawings that struck a more somber note. These, too, are replicas. Based on designer print ads, they feature familiar scenes like a casually dressed couple whose large matching Burberry sunglasses only heighten the sense of disconnection between them. A drawing of a glorious bouquet of flowers in an Italianate vase—expertly copied from a slick photograph—could pass for a Dutch still life, even though the facsimile purse lying inconspicuously beside it suggested the image’s origin as a Gucci ad.

Black pursues, particularly in her drawings, an engagement with art history and archetypal images, sometimes from film. In *Louis Vuitton Woman* (2005)—at 18 by 25 inches one of the larger drawings in the show—we see a sideways head shot of a reclining long-haired young woman in a 1960s choker. The woman’s gaping mouth and blank stare make her look more like a victim in a Hitchcock movie than a beckoning bedmate. In another, fairytale-like scene, a knight on horseback in Burberry plaid pajamas stands in a moonlit forest. Here designer products become descendants of coats of arms and clan tartans.

Black’s sly celebration of commercial graphic design—especially packaging and accessories—

resumes a conversation about the commodification of desire last overheard in the ’90s in the work of Sylvie Fleury, Janine Antoni and Jeff Koons. With the luxury market (art included) raging, the topic is once again timely. —Melissa E. Feldman

Libby Black: *Gucci Canoe*, 2005, mixed mediums, 12 feet long; at Heather Marx.



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