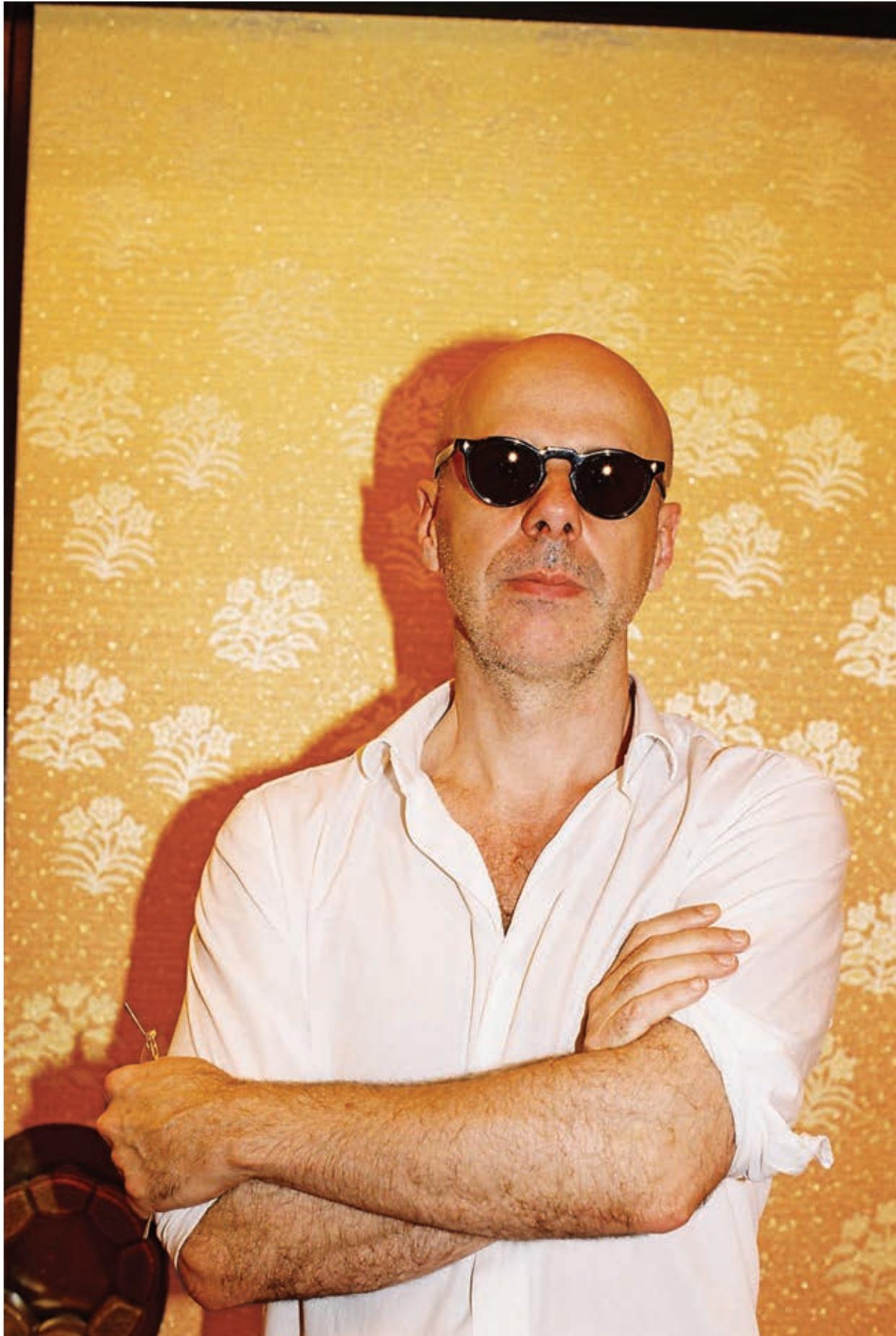


# ArtReview



Philippe Parreno

## Stewart Uoo *Viva la Juicy*

Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo 15 August – 25 September

*Viva la Juicy* represents a transition for the New York-based Stewart Uoo, away from the visceral, postapocalyptic grotesquery of his recent work and towards a subtler, prettier kind of degradation. Gone, at least for now, are the misshapen mannequins of the series *Life is Juicy* (2012), and of *No Sex, No City*, the latter made for a 2013 exhibition at the Whitney Museum. Those sculptures – raddled cyber-zombies riddled with flies and maggots – are set aside in favour of a series of paper objects, based around distressed, deteriorated shopping bags Uoo left out on his Brooklyn roof to the mercy of the sun, rain and snow, or on his studio floor, gathering dust and stains.

The bags, in various states of decay, have been air-dried into thick, paper-pulp bases studded with bedraggled bits of pigeon feather; flies again; and whole cockroaches, embedded in the surface with their backs, legs or articulated bellies protruding. Tattered pink Juicy Couture bags are inlaid into dense, matt black-and-white, paper-pulp surfaces (*Untitled [Juicy Couture Small Black]* and *Untitled [Choose Juicy Large White]*; all works 2015); and on a trio of works based on bits of Hollister packaging, the model couple in

the photograph on the original bags kisses over and over on the badly disintegrated scraps, their bony jaws jammed together in a dismal pastiche of love.

Skilfully incorporated into the bright-white and matt-black paper, the vestiges of death and decay – the flies, the cockroaches, the rotting bits of paper – make an unexpectedly cheerful contrast to the grim, fake glamour of the branded paper bags; and if you don't already find those 'luxury' artefacts dispiriting, just Google 'LV unboxing', and marvel as YouTube starz cream themselves over the stiff paper bags, cardboard boxes, tissue paper and drawstring dust bags that lie between them and their ugly old-lady handbags.

But real glamour, too, is to be found in this show, in the form of a set of glossy-magazine-style portraits commissioned by the artist from fashion photographer James Giles, then mounted on salvaged plywood board. Far from the crummy glamour served up by Hollywood these days, little more than a parade of \$10,000 dresses in heels topped by radiant, chemical-peel faces, here's a dash of the real glamour and mystique

of transgender and gender-fluid beauty, in the form of hairstylist and performer Bailey Stiles, one of Uoo's many fabulous friends. Linger on the Louis Vuitton logo tattoos that swarm up Stiles's sleek torso, the images reference David LaChapelle's 1999 portrait of Lil' Kim – an ad for Louis Vuitton in which the rap star's naked body was 'branded' with painted LV logos – and perhaps too Wim Delvoye's live tattooed pigs, some of which sport vivid LV logos between the Russian prison tats and Disney princesses.

Uoo's work hasn't always struck the mark, the postapocalyptic dummies being one example of a risky, slightly forced eccentricity; and there's a strained relationship between Uoo's 'crazy club-kid' personal brand and his real potential as an artist, forever walking the line between genuinely edgy, transgressive art and parody. But it's clear that he's striving to say something real with these works. There's a moving ruined elegance to the paper objects, in their careful preconstruction of an imagined future world, hacked, garbled artefacts and all, that seems to signal the way forward to something potentially important. *Claire Rigby*



*Untitled (Thicket)*, 2015,  
self-adhesive colour print, salvaged plywood, latex paint, 244 × 122 × 1 cm.  
Courtesy the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo