

# ARTFORUM

SUMMER 2006 I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Summer 2006

## BOSTON

## Taylor Davis

SAMSON PROJECTS

In Taylor Davis's recent exhibition at Samson Projects, low cratelike forms with peepholes and slightly gaping panels; objects resembling drawers fallen out of a dresser; an unsteady, solitary eight-foot plywood phallus; and hay bales caged by wood or silver fabric made up a loose grid on the floor. *Untitled*, 2005, containing one bale of sweet timothy like a chicken in a roomy coop is paired with *Farmer's Daughter 2*, 2005, a crate built tightly around another bale. Together they exemplify the themes of containment and control that ran through the show. Jackie Winsor's cubes-with-apertures are a point of reference here, but Davis is working with the specific social meanings and forms of the functional structures of barnyard and bedroom rather than with the iconography of a monolithic Minimalism.

*Untitled*, 2005, one of the aforementioned "dresser drawers," lies upended at the back of the gallery, showing us the wrong side of its mirror bottom. A small applewood stump grows out of another, while *Farmer's Daughter 3*, 2005, stands on its side, transformed into a suitcase by the addition of a galvanized steel handle (she's eloped!). The phallus, which both anchors the show and calls it all into question, is topped with a silhouette of the classic barn roof—a six-sided gambrel—and sits on a slice of mirror that works less like a pedestal than a doily (still, it's the only work that's not placed directly on the floor). This piece—also titled *Farmer's Daughter*, 2005—is not completely nailed together: Your eye starts where a panel is secure and follows upward to where it splays away from the form. It feels like a meditation on men: It's taller than you, it's empty inside, and it's about to fall apart but won't. Of the works shown here, *Farmer's Daughter* is closest to Davis's *Untitled (Pink/Rosa)*, 2003, another narrow vertical made of wood and mirror, which was installed near a Wade Guyton sculpture at the 2004 Whitney Biennial. But while Guyton's work self-consciously reflects on abstraction and design, Davis's work participates directly in the former, and, stepping into



Taylor Davis, *Farmer's Daughter 2*, 2005, pine, plywood, sweet timothy, and alfalfa, 16 x 20 x 37".

the barn, ignores the latter. Evoking the human body, which Davis does through a strong sense of narrative and the peepholes, knotholes, and slits that appear in almost every work, is crucial here. But so are formal decisions about the relationship of sculpture and support; space, weight, and balance; and level of craft.

Taken together, the three works titled *Farmer's Daughter*—the penis-tower, the hay trapped in a crate, and the drawer turned suitcase—tell a tragicomic joke. Like the anecdote itself, there's both a newness and an age to Davis's meditations on rural forms and situations, on loss and impotence; and her straightforward attention to the telling makes us hope for many more.

—Larissa Harris