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View of "PAINTING," 2021.

LONDON

Al Freeman

CARL KOSTYÁL | LONDON
12a Savile Row
October 15–October 24, 2021



Measure, Soft Box Cutter, Soft Spirit Level, even Soft Toothpaste (for the opening, I guess). Mounted on the walls, the objects span up to just over two meters in length. Vibrantly colored, poppy, and rotund, few artworks have ever so begged for a squeeze.

There's a giddy allure to these sculptures. You're tempted to touch them because you can't: A snook is being cocked at the prissiness of private galleries. The frugality of stuffing leaves each piece only half-fattened, imparting to the objects the kind of welcoming slouchiness that dares you to hurl yourself into them. But more than just sensual frisson, Freeman prioritizes deadpan (and often self-deprecating) wit. For another recent series, "TOPS," 2021, the artist created pillowlike male figures that were naked below the waist. Or as she put it in an interview last spring, "I made a bunch of dicks."

"PAINTING" understands softness to be an equalizing force—an insurrectionist game in this neighborhood. Paintings in Mayfair famously sell for whatever the blue-chip men demand, while pizza can set you back £20. But Freeman's *Soft Pizza Box* contains two uneaten crusts, while each *Soft Back of Painting* (there are two, subtitled *Portrait* and *Landscape*, respectively) conceals what presumably gives a canvas its value: the front. The works share not only a texture but a goofy, down-to-earth appeal. Cute as soft, and cute as shrewd: Freeman's tools are a buoyant riposte to the serious business of art.

— Cal Revely-Calder



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