

P O R T

— July 5, 2013

Jack Lavender: Dreams Chunky

Shallow is the new deep: William Kherbek reviews the artist's first show at The Approach, London

A long time ago I read a music review, I think the Red Hot Chili Peppers were the subject, but I can't be entirely sure now. The writer assessed their newfound maturity by saying something like "If you're shallow for long enough, you end up pretty deep". Anyone who's visited a stoner friend from university two or three years after graduation will beg to differ, but seeing Jack Lavender's *Dreams Chunky* at The Approach, I must say, I do believe that the aforementioned review might have offered insight about modern life that extended beyond the relative merits of "Californication".

Shallowness doesn't get much deeper than Lavender's. Warhol is credited with saying that if you want to understand his work, look at the surface because there's nothing beneath it. In the case of Lavender, most of the surfaces aren't even his. Most of the works in the show consist of mass produced objects arranged into assemblages and mounted on walls or dangled on fresh-from-the-hardware-shop-looking chains. It doesn't get much more shallow than the fake swimming pool that spreads along the floor of the main gallery. It's so shallow, in fact, it lies above the floorboards. As you lean over it to see your Narcissus-like reflection in the plastic sheen of the surface you can have the cares of the day soothed away by the "relaxation" CD playing from the a suspended boom-box. It's standard "calming" synth and water washing along the shoreline of eternity. If you've been to a public swimming pool lately, about the last thing you'll manage to do is relax there, but, as Lavender astutely reveals, focus groups do tell you something, the effect is oddly calming, in a corporate sort of way. Everyone's calm but no one is safe.

The assemblages are similarly potent, they consist of the familiar pound shop detritus of modern post-recession existence, movie posters, wire, dog toys, pictures of onion rings. In terms of compositional tension, the works are very nicely realised. They're kind of like some kind of elaborate pound shop mirror into which you gaze not to see your own reflection, but the reflected values of society.

*Jack Lavender: Dreams Chunky runs until 28 July at [The Approach](#),
47 Approach Road, London E2 9LY*



Jack Lavender, *Dreams Chunky 4*, 2013. Courtesy of the Artist and The Approach

by [William Kherbek](#)