

The 33rd Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts

by Tom Jeffreys

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Lin May Saeed, *Reiniger*, 2006. Steel, styrofoam, paper overall, plastic watering can, acrylic paint, 102 × 70 × 55 centimeters. Image courtesy of the artist; Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt am Main; and Nicolas Krupp, Basel. Photo by Jaka Babnik.

Some of the most striking works are by Lin May Saeed, whose usual narratives of animal liberation come to the fore. She depicts camels, pigs, horses, and deer as actors in their own right, not metaphors or analogies for human excess. *Reiniger* [Cleaner] (2006) is a sculpture of a human figure clad in a white medical gown and clutching a small foal in its arms. The pose comes from news footage of scientists attempting to clean oil from fur and feathers following the sinking of the Exxon Valdez oil tanker in 1989. The human face has been replaced by a watering can, its long spout reminiscent of a plague doctor's mask. I'm intrigued by the figure's lack of hands: Does no opposable thumbs mean no tools and therefore no technology? For it is science here, or more accurately scientism—the belief that science will always save us—that is one subject of Saeed's satire. Her choice of Styrofoam says so much. The mere existence of this ubiquitous petrochemical product eloquently combats any faith in science as salvation (to borrow the title of a 1992 book by Mary Midgley). These days, Saeed suggests, even our most tender acts of care can never be disentangled from the mess we've made. *Reiniger* may show the foal as victim, but at least it has been freed from the satirical role so often assigned to animals.