

JEREMY DICKINSON

Time Out

October 30, 1996



Jeremy Dickinson

Faggionato (Upmarket)

Jeremy Dickinson has found the defining motif of the late twentieth century: the car wreck. His paintings depict stock cars in all their mangled, post-traumatic glory iconised on white backgrounds; denuded of corpses or spectators. They stand as trophies to our desire for senseless spectacle, and when we know that the artist finds his models on scrapheaps, another layer of symbolism is added; the wreck represents a used-up, nowhere-bound individual in a consumer society.

A loaded subject, then. But what comes over far more strongly is an aesthetic viewpoint, since for Dickinson these are evidently lovely objects. He isn't a great painter, rather a decent illustrator with an obsessive eye for detail (though capable of using a good-humoured Expressionist splat to destroy his attempts at *trompe l'oeil*). Yet he can bring out the joy in a twisted chunk of shunted steel. Often the car parts are piled on top of the wobbly chassis – exhaust pipes stick up like candles on a birthday cake. Luscious bodywork tones are lovingly rendered, hot pinks and icy blues contrasting with silvery internal organs. This ugly/beautiful dichotomy suggests a less visceral John Chamberlain or Futurism through the Looking Glass, since the paintings pan out primarily as meditations on industrial form and colour. But the critical undertow is intact and the overwhelming optical pleasure allows it just enough headspace for us to feel guilty about enjoying ourselves. We are denied the chance to mourn the lowest-common-denominator tendency of our culture and society. I don't know whether to thank Mr. Dickinson, or to speculate that he has horns and a tail. *Martin Herbert*