



Fatty, 2006, mixed media on canvas, 16s x 13 1/2 in. Courtesy Slater, Los Angeles

OH BROTHER: HENRY TAYLOR

Los Angeles artist Henry Taylor's North American solo museum debut, *Sis and Bra*, at the Studio Museum in Harlem this month, comprises ten portrait paintings of what Taylor refers to as 'loved ones' - in the case of the 2004 title work, his sister and brother. Other paintings reveal a looser sense of what 'bra' means to Taylor, with titles such as *Fatty* (2006), *Low Ride* (Free 99) (2004) and *Barbeque* (2006), which features an image of the artist's own head on a barbecue grill. Taylor's choice of subjects is simple: "I paint those subjects I have love and sympathy for."

Before committing himself to art, Taylor studied journalism, but realised "it wasn't the right way for me to tell stories", he says. He was homeless for a stint, but went on to work as a psychiatric technician at Camarillo State Hospital for a decade before enrolling at CalArts in his late thirties.

Consequently he approaches painting with a reporter's eye, combined with a

penetrating insight into the human condition. His recent works, however, are often culled from scenes and gatherings of family and friends, depicted with an inherent political slant and acutely observed details. They capture the quirks and transitional moments of an almost stereotypical African-American suburban existence.

The loose, buttery feel of the oil paint and emotional rawness adds an anything-can-happen quality to Taylor's work. Some surface areas are unfinished or completed with a swipe or dribble of paint, in a crude, almost folk-art approach. His strong painterly compositions and unabashedly optimistic Caribbean-influenced use of colour notwithstanding, the artist seems to hint at darker messages. *Tasered* (2005), for example, depicts a guy whom Taylor met in an alley who had been shot with a Taser stun gun - a chance encounter that had a profound impact on the artist. *Emma Gray*

HENRY TAYLOR: *SIS AND BRA*, 11 APRIL - 1 JULY
STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM,
NEW YORK
WWW.STUDIOMUSEUM.ORG

KA-POW!: CULT FICTION: ART & COMICS

Contemporary art has always had a love affair with comics; think Roy Lichtenstein or Philip Guston, Raymond Pettibon, Takashi Murakami and Marcel Dzama. Comic artists, for their part, have been lauded as some of the great visual chroniclers of their times, luminaries such as Robert Crumb, Hergé or Alan Moore. Yet contemporary art is now seen as the epitome of cultural cool, while comics are always seen as, well, just a bit geeky.

Perhaps to redress this lazy imbalance, *Cult Fiction: Art & Comics*, an extensive Hayward Gallery touring exhibition, charts the fertile common culture of two genres that are rarely shown in the same context, showcasing artists whose work is steeped in the sensibility of comicdom - Dzama and Pettibon are there, so too younger artists such as Kerry James Marshall, Laylah Ali and Paul McDevitt. Alongside these are the leading lights of comic art itself - France's experimental Killoffer, Canadian Julie Doucet and the deranged satire of American Travis Millard. Together they define a level of visual and conceptual ambition that suggests that while art and comics are too often seen apart, they are driven by the same quizzical, anarchic enthusiasm for ordinary (and not-so-ordinary) life.
J.J. Charlesworth

CULT FICTION: ART & COMICS
NEW ART GALLERY, WALSALL, 4 MAY -
1 JULY, TOURING THE UK INTO 2008
WWW.HAYWARDGALLERY.ORG.UK



Travis Millard, Sally, 2004. © the artist. Courtesy the artist and Richard Heller Gallery, Los Angeles