

Jester 1, 2020

Self-adhesive vinyl on found photograph, 24.6 x 20.1cm

Audio Description © Eleanor Margolies

This image is in vertical format, taller than it is wide. It is a full length black and white portrait with hand-cut vinyl circles of differing sizes adhered to it. The first impression is of a cloud of coloured bubbles in roughly human form, with larger bubbles forming the head, torso and hips. From behind the bubbles, parts of the original photo are just visible: a pair of legs in glossy black shoes, an elbow, a forearm. The rest of the body and head are obscured by the coloured bubbles. The photo is crisp, lit from one side to give definition to the limbs, with a white background, and no distinction between floor and wall, as if taken against a screen in a professional photo studio.

The layered edges of the overlapping adhesive vinyl circles form small dimples and shadows, making it obvious that these additions are physical, not digital. The circles are sky blue, egg yolk yellow, turquoise, pink, lilac – the cheerful colours of balloons – with just a few in navy blue or dark red. They are in different sizes. In proportion to the model's body, they are the size of beach balls, footballs and rounders balls. In the area of the head, three are layered on top of each other: a yellow disc has a halo - or headdress - of red and green discs behind it. Around the hips, large pink, blue and yellow circles of beach ball size suggest a fantastically puffed skirt, perhaps an interpretation of a medieval jester's costume, as the title suggests. The boldly coloured circles also recall the costumes that Russian artists of the 1920s like Alexandra Exter and Lyubov Popova designed for theatre. More circles puff out from

the shoulders, while a few smaller circles float free of the figure, as if they really are bubbles, giving the impression of movement.

Who is the figure underneath? The slender legs are posed with one leg facing towards us, the other pointing to the side. The bubbles come down to mid-thigh, so we can't tell what she might be wearing – whether it's a mini-skirt or a spangly leotard. She has shiny black court shoes with a square heel that could be the shoes of an office worker in the 1960s or 1970s. Her arms are bent, as if her hands are on her hips – it's a playful pose, the asymmetry of the legs making it unthreatening. The slick photography suggests it could come from a vintage theatrical, office or even appliance advertisement but the addition of the coloured bubbles takes us into a completely different world.