

# ARTFORUM

## Brendan Fowler

CAPITAL

716 Sacramento Street

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The repeated circle patterns that top Brendan Fowler's two large, layered wall pieces are made with an industrial embroidery machine—the kind that stitches logos onto sports jackets and baseball caps. This process translates the traditionally decorative craft associated with leisure and personalization into an automated, mass-market context. Though the wall pieces could technically be called photographs due to the blurry digital ink-jet prints that comprise the base layer of each, their disorienting stratification is demonstrated by the materials list: rayon and printable polyester on archival pigment prints mounted on dyed canvas. The photographs' subjects are barely recognizable, as in *Nancy Getting Birthday Cake with Empty Polka Dot Motif, Notebook and Sampler Piece Instructions*, 2015, in which a human figure is eclipsed by blurs of light and stitched over with circles—a stock image from the quilting software Fowler uses—as well as the outline of a notebook, labels, and instructions for using a digital sampler.

The embroidery machine's imprecision can create blips and flaws, especially where shapes overlap partially. A loop of sampled sounds in various combinations also expands the show's theme of layering and pastiche. Using a digital sampler that has been central to the artist's previous performance work, here placed on a large wooden bench constructed for the show, Fowler improvises variations of pre-set sounds. As with the generic imagery in the two wall pieces, Fowler uses the vocabulary of variable and repetition, choosing from ready-made elements to explore the uncanny effects of creating through permutation, playback, and machinated glitch.

— Monica Westin



**Brendan Fowler, *Nancy Getting Birthday Cake with Empty Polka Dot Motif, Notebook and Sampler Piece Instructions*, 2015**, rayon, polyester, archival pigment print, acrylic, canvas, aluminum stretchers, 60 x 40 x 1 1/2".