

# ARTFORUM

## JIM LAMBIE

ANTON KERN GALLERY

"Too many stripes can finally drive you mad," Michel Pastoureau, the chief historian of this elemental pattern, has observed. But how many is too many? Glasgow-based artist Jim Lambie seems determined to find out. Since 1999, Lambie has been completely covering gallery floors with vinyl adhesive tape placed edge to edge, creating site-specific paintings that transform ordinary spaces into Saul Bass dream sequences and has garnered comparisons to figures as various as Daniel Buren, Bridget Riley, and, less often but more aptly, Gene Davis. *Zobop*, 1999–2003, is the best known of these works. First installed at London's Showroom Gallery and reprised at other venues, it consists of concentric bands of multicolored tape with which the artist meticulously follows the outline of the floor in ever-shrinking iterations, thus highlighting and exaggerating the contours of the space.

By comparison, *Male Stripper*, 2003, underfoot in Lambie's recent show, was relatively restrained. The floor was again covered, but in simpler parallel stripes of black and white. This optically unstable surface served as a woozy ground for five freestanding sculptural assemblages that reconstituted found objects and cheap, gaudy materials in weirdly lyrical ways. Lambie seems motivated by a passionate appreciation of the kinds of goods sold at thrift shops, ninety-nine-cent stores, or Canal Street wholesalers, performing what might be called rehabilitative operations on the vast drifts of merchandise that pile up at the bottom of capitalism's Great Chain of Being. Here he sheathed in sequined tube tops a pair of PVC pipes propped like columns at one end of the gallery (*Boobalicious*, 2004), encrusted used handbags with shards of mirrored Plexiglas (*Leg-o-matic*, 2004), and stuck paisley decals all over a pile of brightly painted tires (*Slow Motion*, 2004). Each assemblage was nestled against a small, freestanding fiberboard wall that functioned as both structural support and visual ground: *Leg-o-matic's* handbags, for example, hung in tangled profusion from the legs of a small wooden table that had been turned sideways and affixed to the side of the upright slab, which itself was covered in concentric circles of bright pink and blue vinyl. The backdrops lent each assemblage the theatrical frontality one associates with museum dioramas or department-store windows or with the kind of small, cramped stage that the artist's erstwhile band the Boy Hairdressers might once have played on in Glasgow clubs. These works, too, were a kind of glam performance, using the strategies of camp to reclassify the déclassé. On entering the gallery, one could see only the backs of the fiberboard slabs, which were covered, like the floor, in strips of black and white tape. From that vantage point, the show looked like an exercise in an austere, if dizzying, abstraction, geared more toward inducing phenomenological meltdown than toward excavating the landfills of consumer culture. But, of course, it did both.



Jim Lambie, *Slow Motion*, 2004, MDF, vinyl stickers, rubber tires, enamel paint, sneakers, mirrors, and vinyl tape, 42 x 96 x 44".