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# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## Perfectionism, Beaded Punching Bags and Zombie Formalism

John Lees, Lucy Dodd and Jeffrey Gibson in this week's Fine Art

Wall Street Journal, November 21, 2015

By Peter Plagens



'SHARECROPPER' (2015) by Jeffrey Gibson. PHOTO: MARC STRAUS GALLERY

The term “mashup” has expanded beyond its origins in the music industry (where it originally referred to songs collaged from other songs) and is now routinely

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applied to television shows, literature and even computer technology. Sometimes it's proceeded by the word "cultural." In art exhibitions, this is most often a red flag for failure, or at least overreach. But not in the case of Jeffrey Gibson (b. 1972), an artist of Choctaw and Cherokee lineage who was raised in Germany and South Korea as well as in the U.S.

While his exhibition includes some small, elegant geometric abstract paintings (one on an animal hide), it's his beaded punching bags—with the Everlast label left prominent—that steal the show. They're sculpturally efficient and powerful (hanging cylinders will do that), dazzlingly colorful, and—despite their obviousness as political art (American Indian culture as a punching bag for the white man)—quite poetic. A man behind the desk in the gallery told me that the hundreds of rolled metal discs that Mr. Gibson uses as fringe on some of the bags (and which Indian dancers use on their costumes for sound) initially came from the tops of canned goods that Indians once traded their handmade crafts for. Now, the cones are manufactured in China, and Mr. Gibson buys them by the case—a material mashup that fits perfectly with his beautiful culture clash.

## **Jeffrey Gibson**

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*—Mr. Plagens is an artist and writer in New York.*

Extracted from Source: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/perfectionism-beaded-punching-bags-and-zombie-formalism-1448060361>