



Leo Fitzmaurice, *CAMEL LIMITED EDITION BLUE*, 2009, cigarette packet, 31/2 × 37/8". From the series "Post Match," 1996–2017.

## Leo Fitzmaurice

### THE SUNDAY PAINTER

Manchester United's 1995–96 away-game shirt is regularly cited as among the worst-ever Premier League designs. Not only was the mottled gray top hideous, but players complained they could not spot teammates on the field. Down 3–0 at Southampton, the struggling Man U team quickly changed their uniforms at halftime, and their game improved (but they lost anyway). The mud-colored top was never seen again.

Vibrant solids are generally chosen for team jerseys, and these are embellished in standard, uncomplicated patterns. The sponsor's name is writ large at the shirt's center. The team badge is usually stitched above the player's heart, and symmetrically to the left is the sportswear manufacturer's logo—a leaping puma or wordless swoosh. Curious symbols and digits might grace the sleeves, and a trim collar finishes off each shirt.

Weirdly, this basic arrangement corresponds in miniature to the design of cigarette packaging, and this uncanny resemblance is the conceit behind "Post Match," 1996–2017, Leo Fitzmaurice's series of assisted readymades. Fitzmaurice made the connection in the mid-

1990s, when he noticed in the street a discarded cigarette packet that looked like a miniature fallen athlete. For twenty-odd years the artist has flattened Marlboro or Camel Light boxes to craft 540 tiny paper sport shirts, and the resulting collection—arranged in a grid-like pattern on a two-story-high wall—is a sheer delight.

From a distance, the installation at The Sunday Painter recalled the neutral patterns of Daniel Buren or Niele Toroni. Up close, we discovered each patch to be intensely detailed, a perfect shirt-simulacrum down to the neatly folded itty-bitty collar sliced from the packet top. The color palette corresponds precisely: Sky cigarettes share the same bright blue with Chelsea; Chesterfield's dramatic white-and-blue patterning recalls Italy's Azzurri. Both sportswear and cig-packet designs occasionally venture into thin stripes, even harlequin checks, and occasionally they take a stab at asymmetry: Silk Cut's single purple "shoulder," for example, or Newcastle United's third kit from the 2015–16 season, with its off-center pink and white stripes. And both feature splashes of gold or silver and lean toward heraldic motifs. Fleurs-de-lis, stylized crowns, and mysterious crests abound inexplicably; are we to associate Sheffield Wednesday or Lucky Strikes with royalty? They're vaguely militaristic, too, sometimes displaying racks of illegible medallions. The neat rows of little men in "Post Match" resemble nothing so much as advancing troops in alignment, even if the whole army could fit in a shoebox.

Fitzmaurice's brilliant overlap of football and fags (UK terms for *soccer* and *cigarettes*) instantly condenses the stereotypical British working-class male, who allegedly worships football, smokes up a storm—and thinks small. The recent spike in internet gambling sites sponsoring football clubs—logos of online betting dot-coms now emblazon the garb of nearly half the Premier League—offers additional insight into presumed audience tastes. But in twenty-first-century Britain there is no stereotypical soccer fan. Perhaps the only event able to unite the nation across gender, political, class, or racial divides is the World Cup, during which great swaths of the country miraculously join together to root for England. The collective euphoria is reliably short-lived (England hasn't played a final since 1966, but frankly that's the least of the country's problems).

With Brexit looming, young European Union immigrant families who just settled in England—who in 2012 dressed their newborns in Team Great Britain Olympic onesies—have discovered they're no longer wanted, and their children are considered undesirables at the local kindergarten. "Post Match" thus becomes a prophetic symbol: The great British welcome turned out to be disposable, small-hearted, and paper-thin.

—Gilda Williams