
Myers, Julian, "Vitamin 3-D," *Phaidon Press*, 2009.

Can sculpture still be made today? On the evidence of Anna Sew Hoy's various productions, our answer might be 'not really' — at least not on the terms on which sculpture was once established. Not unless, as Rosalind Krauss suggested in her essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', 'the category can be made to become almost infinitely malleable' — in which case, she claims, the term wouldn't be of much descriptive use. If sculpture in the 1960s had become 'a kind of ontological absence, the combination of exclusions, the sum of the neither/nor', today its sole condition is that it should preclude any condition whatsoever. Under this inverse injunction, anything goes and nothing goes; artworks in the vicinity of sculpture dramatize their perverse inclusivity even as they studiously avert the development of constructive order.

Sew Hoy's artworks navigate this weird situation with alacrity and wit, sewing together painted ceramic or plaster forms with found materials and consumer detritus. In her objects, wood, rocks, denim, beer cans, wire, power cables, beads, feathers, trashed cellphones and other 'objects and materials that people have a real connection to' find a place. We have a connection to these objects and materials because, through the mass production of consumer goods, we wear and own duplicates of these things, and because, through the turnover of styles or planned obsolescence, we have also disposed of them. In this way her work may invert the ambivalent strategies of Neo-Geo, replacing its fetishistic love of the brand new with an inventive and obsessive re-purposing of the hyper-disposable.

Unlike Kurt Schwitters, who imagined his found objects knitting together into a synthetic and abstract unity, Sew Hoy doesn't transform these materials into something else. The Sapporo beer cans knotted together in *Meteor* (2004) remain resolutely themselves, even if they find themselves in a new formal relationship (the artist has cited ikebana — Japanese flower arranging — as one model). Her title for the work is playfully descriptive: half ornamental, the work doubles as a representation, by way of spent aluminium, of the pocked surfaces of a rock hurtling from outer space. Indeed, asteroids, constellations, clusters, knots and lumps are her favourite shapes: they present an entropic world of possessions gone haywire, a loosely defined system of objects smelling faintly of *Comme des Garçons* #2.

Part of a thriving scene of artists, fashion designers and architects in Los Angeles — including the Sundown Salon and Assume Vivid Astro Focus, with whom Sew Hoy has collaborated — she incorporates their various tactics into artworks both posed and stylishly imperfect. When tossed onto a flat surface, altered shirts double as drawings; shredded stonewash denim is threaded through the holes of a coral-like ceramic tangle (*Arena*, 2006, part of her *Scholar Rocks* series). In a modernity that is increasingly planned and designed — and without a stable idea of 'nature' against which this abstract world might be judged or brought to view — neither the syntax proper to sculpture, nor the structural logic of the 'expanded' forms that Krauss puts forwards, seem to function as they once did. Sew Hoy's mirror blobs and bulging denim look to a distorted and awkward form of craft as a possible new nature for sculpture. [Julian Myers]

01





01 Centre:

→ *Circuit*, 2007
Wood, denim, flocking, polyurethane rigid expanding foam, paint
Dimensions variable

from left:

→ *Point*, 2007
Glazed ceramic, T-shirt, electrical cords, string, papier-mâché, paint, resin finger hook
122 x 45 x 19 cm

→ *Display*, 2007
Glazed ceramic, denim, necklaces from the artist's collection, resin finger hook
66 x 48 x 9 cm

→ *Two eyes*, 2007
Glazed ceramic, metal chain, denim, resin finger hook
190 x 44 x 13 cm

→ *Om*, 2007
Glazed ceramic, flocking, two resin finger hooks
53 x 41 x 13 cm

→ *Exploded*, 2007
Ceramic part, flocking, mud, papier-mâché, fabric and string, resin finger hook
76 x 48 x 13 cm

→ *Held*, 2007
Ceramic part, flocking mud, papier-mâché, fabric and string, resin finger hook
117 x 39 x 14 cm

→ *Speech*, 2007

Ceramic part, wire, acid wash cotton, resin finger hook, electrical cord
226 x 38 x 29 cm

02 *Display*, 2007

Glazed ceramic, denim, necklaces, resin finger hooks, screw
66 x 48 x 9 cm

03 *Two eyes*, 2007

Glazed ceramic, metal chain, denim, resin finger hook
190 x 45 x 13 cm

04 *Arena*, 2006

Iridescent glazed ceramic, electrical pipe, stone-wash denim
Height approx. 183 cm

02

03



04