

Anna Sew Hoy

KARYN LOVEGROVE GALLERY

Over the last few years, Anna Sew Hoy has fashioned sculptures that function as pedestals for bottles of designer fragrances and offered lines of handcrafted jewelry, vases, ashtrays, and paperweights. Her latest outing, in which she paneled Karyn Lovegrove Gallery with whitewashed plywood, turned the space into what looked like a boutique stocked with designer handbags, decorative platters and trivets, and culturally scrambled ethnographic trinkets. Far from offering a high-low cultural critique, Sew Hoy's latest works suggests more of a post-high-low revelry.

Hanging on resin "finger hooks" around the gallery were hand-built ceramic slabs with handles made of fabric and other materials looped through holes. The basic relationship between hanger and hung, reiterated in the exhibition's title, "hook & eye," is central to the works themselves, which include both hook- and peglike appendages from which other items dangle, and holes through which assorted material is inserted and woven. The results, exemplified by *Display* (all works 2007), a rack for jewelry from the artist's own collection, are objects in which presentation is layered, with each element contextualizing—by displaying and/or accessorizing—the next.

There's no shortage of fetishism in these works. *Two-Eyes* droops from a gold-toned choke chain inserted through its namesake openings, and flaunts the remains of a pair of jeans whose denim has been stripped down to the extent that only a web of seams, hems, and bands remains. *Point* is swathed in fabric commercially printed with a snake motif, and from its peg cascades a tangle of black electrical cords. In a perfect poem of accessories, the valentine-shaped slab in

Anna Sew Hoy,
Display, 2007, glazed
ceramic, denim,
necklaces, resin, and
screw, 26 x 19 x 3 3/4".



Heart, riddled with tears and holes, is draped in gold chains, networking cables, and, again, vandalized jeans. From the stretched almond eyes of *Mask*, which bears a hook at its top like a bent horn, trail the two ends of a silver chain, looped into teardrop or noose shapes. And in the masklike *Speech*, a loop of wire forms a crumpled speech bubble emanating from the bottom of an oval plaque, its words trailing off in strips of fabric and a cast-off charging cord.

There's an undeniable sexual aggression to these objects, which, when less suggestive of masks, are often more like fertility plaques gone wild. *Wash* gushes with milky clear and lavender glaze, as its lone eye grows into a gaping orifice, beneath which a peg, broken at the tip, struggles to attention while being strangled by a knot of white cord. *Mirror* hangs from a strap of acid-washed black denim, as two pegs mounted on its surface handle the business of stretching open a slit in the remains of a T-shirt.

This is utterly contemporary work, in both its go-lightly cannibalism with regard to boomer-era agendas and preoccupations—from Funk art and folk craft to essentialist symbolism—and its openness to the cultural forms and detritus of its moment (arguably not unlike Robert Rauschenberg's openness to that of his) as legitimate grist for serious artmaking. But it is also seriously old-school sculpture, concerned with questions of mass, shape, and gravity, materiality and engineering, and appropriately devoted to the functional, formal, and poetic union of objects.

—Christopher Miles