

Anna Sew Hoy
The Wettest Letter
March 16 - April 27, 2019

VSF is pleased to present *The Wettest Letter*, Anna Sew Hoy's third solo exhibition with the gallery. Working with clay for over twenty years, Sew Hoy's sculptures express a multitude of textures, exchanges, and active states by way of the body – hers, the onlooker's, and the clay's own physicality, each reactive and mutable. Whether the sculptures are pliant, rigid, dewy, dry, sagging or taut, their states also apply to bodies, and Sew Hoy contrasts these states to suggest corporeal sensations

such as touch, pain, pleasure, depletion, and rest. The textures gain meaning from being layered. For example, a fired clay surface appears parched when paired alongside a creamy glaze. Each material layer is an index for the other.

The shapes of Sew Hoy's new sculptures allude to an anatomy that is subjective and fluid: breasts morph into a kidney pool, a shield becomes a smile, a thumb grows into a tentacle. Sew Hoy's highly tactile pieces embrace a type of sensuous ambiguity, refusing to comply with the body's physical limitations or gender. Sew Hoy's new works describe an interior place that is both mental and architectural; room inside room, body inside body.

Dressed in debris, remnants from contemporary yet soon obsolete communication and culture – an old keyboard and mouse, tangled earbuds, acid wash jeans, or patent leather – the sculptures present a queered landscape where personal possessions and the rituals we construct around them impart new meaning.

Installed in the open-air courtyard, sculptural basins with grotto-like arches double as bird baths. Inside the gallery, wall works are glazed in chrome and gold, emulating mirrors, with finger-like hooks that insinuate “come hither” and “coat rack” at the same time. Containing small reflections of their exterior forms, whether through a pool of water, a hole, or a lacquered sheen, these are structures for interiority. A nonbinary space for both protection and openness.

The title of the show comes from a riddle as told by Liz Lerner: What is the wettest letter of the alphabet? Answer: the C. A letter shape-shifts into wetness. A clay body, once pliable, becomes obdurate stoneware. Sew Hoy plumbs the fundamental spirit of our stuff. Through use and care, we share life with the inanimate things around us. If flesh can have soul, why not clay?

The artist would like to thank the Center for Contemporary Ceramics at California State University, Long Beach, for ongoing support in fabricating work in clay; as well as the Department of Visual Arts at the University of California, San Diego, for her selection as the Longenecker Roth Distinguished Artist in Residence in Fall 2018.