



Anna Sew Hoy by Holly Myers

Among the many young artists engaged in what you might call the everything-but-the-kitchen-sink vein of sculpture so prevalent in Los Angeles today – sculpture that exploits the breakdown of media specificity, making copious use of found objects and banal industrial materials – New Zealand-born, LA-based artist Anna Sew Hoy is a clear standout, exemplifying this nascent tradition’s freewheeling range of possibility without sacrificing the rigour and resonance of a traditionally crafted object. The distinction may not immediately be apparent. Indeed, so varied is her output that it takes a couple of exhibitions just to figure out what she’s up to. Her recent solo show at Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, for instance, involved a sprawling squidlike form made from stuffed scraps of denim jeans and a series of wall-mounted clay medallions so roughly hewn as to look almost primitive, and strung like totems with bits of jewellery and cloth. The selection of works that appeared in the UCLA Hammer Museum’s *Eden’s Edge: Fifteen LA Artists* last summer included a tumbleweed made from Sapporo beer cans and an almost gaudy selection of dreamcatchers: hollow spheres of glazed clay adorned with chains, bits of rope, beads, feathers and bottle caps. Another group show – *Without Sun*, at Christopher Grimes Gallery and Chung King Project – involved a tree trunk wound in sweaters and perfume bottles, and a bicycle consumed in polyurethane foam. Over the last several years, Sew Hoy has also made drawings, jewellery, clothing and books.

What unites these disparate works, above all, is an exceptional sensitivity to form and texture. Convoluted skeins of glazed clay; taut ropes and dangling chains; twisted swathes of denim, terry cloth, cotton or wool; bulbous mounds of foam; twisted aluminium; perfume bottles, charms, crystals and other trinkets – Sew Hoy winds these discordant materials into patiently crafted, dazzlingly intricate visual puzzles that call to mind the likes of Eva Hesse and Lee Bontecou. Each is an engrossing study in contrasts: organic and synthetic, glossy and matt, heavy and light, hard and pliant, clumsy and delicate, spontaneous and calculated, reckless and disciplined. An affinity for culturally totemic forms, meanwhile – medallions or shields, dreamcatchers, tumbleweeds, wooden rods or staffs, Chinese scholars’ rocks – lends the work a sense of historical, even spiritual grounding. The result is a rare and enchanting sort of potency that leaves one eagerly anticipating the artist’s future developments.

from left: *Two Eyes*, 2007, glazed ceramic, chain, denim, resin and screw, 191 x 43 x 13 cm, photo: artist; *Eden’s Edge: Fifteen LA Artists*, 2007 (installation view), photo: Joshua White. facing page: *Violetnoir*, 2004, photo: artist. All works: courtesy the artist and Karyn Lovegrove, Los Angeles

