

BORN 1973 IN MOBILE, ALABAMA
LIVES IN EAGLE ROCK AND WORKS IN HIGHLAND PARK

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KATHRYN ANDREWS

Kathryn Andrews gets much of the inspiration for her sculptures by driving around Los Angeles. The city's jumble of cultures, styles, and values—which are abundantly evident when one traverses the boulevards that run east to west from downtown to the beach—find their way into her unorthodox configurations of objects. In a practice that nimbly navigates the histories of pop, minimalism, light and space, and the total absorption of Marcel Duchamp's readymade, her engagement with L.A.'s notorious car culture extends to a fascination with "finish fetish." Chrome-plated steel and aluminum objects—clothes racks, protective window bars, highly reflective panels, and industrial tubing—often figure prominently in her work. Taking everyday found objects and applying a refined customized polished finish superficially renders them valuable, their shiny patinas denoting beauty and seductiveness. These "upgraded" forms often serve as display mechanisms or hanging devices for other objects, and at the heart of Andrews's compositions are carefully orchestrated juxtapositions of seemingly divergent materials whose contradictory signifiers crisscross in what the artist has admitted is often an "unhappy marriage."¹

January 23 (2010), for example, which is titled for the date the work was completed, pairs steel window bars chromed to a reflective silver and mounted on the wall with inflated Mylar and rubber balloons. The conspicuous tensions between these objects are numerous: one is customized, while the other is a readily available commodity; one suggests a response to a threat, and the other is trotted out only for festive occasions; one is industrial and built to last, while the other is cheaply produced and inherently ephemeral, destined to deflate over time. Like Haim Steinbach and other predecessors, Andrews has reversed the usual order of sculpture and display so that the object that ostensibly serves as the background, the mode

of display, or the "pedestal" has been exactly fabricated, while the thing upon it is a store-bought readymade.

Andrews's practice includes curatorial projects, and since 2007 she has had a gallery in her home in the Eagle Rock neighborhood of Los Angeles, called Apartment 2, where she presents single-artist exhibitions. The group shows that she has organized have always included her own work as a means to examine complicated questions of authorship. For her first curatorial endeavor, *Modern Lovers* at Glendale Community College, she invited ten artists to participate and then asked some for their permission to make responses to their works. Andrews placed these newly fabricated pieces in uncomfortably close proximity to those of the other artists and left them unlabeled. Her refusal to title or take credit for the works grew out of a desire to resist the usual apparatuses of art display, in which a work, once attributed to an artist, is understood in a particular way. One begins to define the other in a sometimes reductive encounter; in Andrews's words: "Oh, that's Kathryn Andrews. She does X."² Remaining anonymous allowed her assertive yet witty artistic and curatorial intervention to remain ambiguous.

As a further investigation into what might be described as a post-modern understanding of authorship that acknowledges our culture's propensity for shared references, quotation, and the broad dispersal of images and ideas, Andrews began renting props from theatrical and Hollywood prop houses and integrating them into her sculptures. The use of props, like that of the unstable balloons, is a means to contradict, to some degree, the expected longevity of an artwork once it leaves the studio and enters a collection, since the props, as rentals, are intended to be returned in order to be redistributed for further use. Incorporating such objects as mannequins, clown costumes and accessories, and a plain white T-shirt worn by Brad Pitt on the set of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*,

these works allow Andrews not only to present readymades that have been circulating in a system of distribution outside the art world but also to incorporate found objects with an inflated symbolic value. Clown accoutrements and used wrapped gifts suggest a kind of forced uneasy celebration, as seen in several works selected for *Made in L.A. 2012*, including *Clown Rack* (2010), *Untitled (Clown Cabinet)* (2011), and *Rainbow Successor* (2011) as well as her Gift prints from 2011 featuring large, elaborate bows. Props from popular Hollywood films—Brad Pitt's T-shirt, a wedding ring worn by Ashton Kutcher, and a motorcycle helmet used by one of the leading actresses in *Charlie's Angels*—carry with them a heightened patina of celebrity and desire. Andrews's selections are precise in their references to both art history—the clowns immediately conjure Bruce Nauman, while the balloons recall Jeff Koons—and pop culture, and a delightful and buoyant sense of humor accompanies the serious questions that the artist asks about how contemporary art might find new ways to operate within our current economic and museological systems.

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Notes

1. Kathryn Andrews, in Michael Ned Holte, "Slight of Hand" (interview), *Kaleidoscope: A Contemporary Magazine*, no. 10 (Spring 2011): 65.
2. *Ibid.*, 59.

HAMMER