

LOS ANGELES

EVAN HOLLOWAY

David Kordansky

It is possible to argue—and, indeed, I heard it argued while visiting this exhibition—that Evan Holloway belongs to the first generation of artists in Los Angeles that did not look outside of California, to New York or to Europe, to define their work, whether through aspiration or through contradiction. If that sounds like hyperbole, it may not be as far-fetched as it initially seems. In any case, it is undeniable that in the late 1990s, a loose group of L.A. artists—including Holloway, Liz Craft, Jason Meadows, Jeff Ono and Kristin Calabrese—emerged with a distinctly homegrown vernacular.

The credit should, in fairness, go partly to the artists who taught them at the Art Center College of Design and UCLA: Mike Kelley, Charles Ray, Paul McCarthy and Chris Burden



in particular. Holloway's first exhibition at David Kordansky Gallery amounted to a six-work survey of his signature pieces, and, as such, allowed visitors to see the range of his work as well as the influence of his various predecessors. A large sculpture made from cast-bronze branches and twigs, connected one to the other in successively narrower widths and turning 90 degrees at each joint, is the kind of material riddle that Ray might have dreamt up. The piece, *Serpent and Lightning* (2016), is a satisfying variation on a work Holloway made in 2000 called *Gray Scale* and proves that there is still gas in the tank for that particular idea.

Holloway has also created a number of works over the years studded with household batteries. In the sculpture *Landscape* (2015), dead batteries are sunk into wavy upright plaster forms that resemble cacti or kelp. Like Mike Kelley's series "Memory Ware" (2000-10), *Landscape* is charged not

Evan Holloway:
*Plants and
Lamps*, 2015,
steel, cardboard,
Aqua-Resin, epoxy
resin, fiberglass,
sandbags,
Celluclay and
paint, dimensions
variable; at David
Kordansky.

with electricity but with pathos—today more than ever, when environmentally toxic alkaline batteries already feel somewhat outdated.

It is hard to imagine Holloway's work ever feeling radically new, and that is undoubtedly part of its charm. He has consistently rejected the gloss and polish of outsourced fabrication techniques, preferring instead gloopy craft materials like plaster, Celluclay, Sculptamold and Aqua-Resin. A large 2015 sculpture titled *Benzoin* is a knotted Möbius strip reconceived as an example of anodyne, business-park modernism, except that it is made from unevenly scraped gray fiberglass and does double duty as a holder for a smoldering incense stick. The witty sculpture, which satirizes Southern California's collision of Eastern mysticism and corporate pragmatism, is actually a close reworking of a smaller piece from 2001, *Incense Sculpture*. It is depressing to think that Holloway's observation from 15 years ago remains as pertinent as it did when he first made it.

Even the works on view that were new to Holloway's formal lexicon evoked L.A. references. *Plants and Lamps* (2015) is an arrangement of luscious potted plants thickly rendered in painted clay, with two industrial modernist lamps, made from the same material, looming overhead. The work is, as far as I know, a fresh addition to Holloway's oeuvre. Yet the containers resemble mid-century earthenware planters by L.A. ceramists David Cressey and Robert Maxwell; the plants (inadvertently or not) recall certain works recently exhibited at Kordansky, by Rashid Johnson, Jonas Wood and Andrew Dadson. Is Holloway once again situating himself in a hyper-local context?

Holloway is at his best at intimate scale; my favorite work in the show was also the smallest. *In the Column* (2015) consists of a curved steel armature dangling on a chain from the ceiling. Dozens of tiny, elongated faces—seemingly shrunken casts, perhaps of the artist himself—jut out on steel rods. This cloud of faces, each slumbering or meditating with closed eyes, feels like a lo-fi Surrealist dream of community.

—Jonathan Griffin