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Special to *The Times*

Conventions don't stand a chance

Anna Sew Hoy's installation at the Karyn Lovegrove Gallery looks as if it's the offspring of a trading post from the Old West and a high-end boutique from Beverly Hills. Both primitive and sophisticated, raw and refined, Sew Hoy's 12 wall sculptures and single floor piece in the main gallery treat art and design as if they're two sides of the same coin: conventions to be messed with in order to mess with a viewer's expectations — not to mention one's head.

The gallery walls have been covered with standard sheets of whitewashed plywood, leaving the grain visible but softening its contrasts. Hanging at different heights, like the tools in a tinkerer's workshop or decorations in a mom-and-pop shop, are Sew Hoy's abstract sculptures.

Each is a platter-size disk of fired clay that Sew Hoy has variously festooned with metal necklaces, discarded electrical cords, headphones, bent lengths of wire, flayed jeans, a T-shirt and a

freshly washed bath towel. Many of the glazed and flocked disks have holes punched or poked through them. Odd knobs protrude from others. A few have both features, the stubby protrusions and torn orifices combining with the clay's ruggedness to suggest animal hides or ceremonial talismans.

Some of the holes recall those in road signs that scofflaws have used for target practice. Others resemble eyes and mouths, suggesting faces or masks. Still others evoke holes in doughnuts or car tires, creating calm pools of emptiness around which Sew Hoy's brand of taut madness swirls.

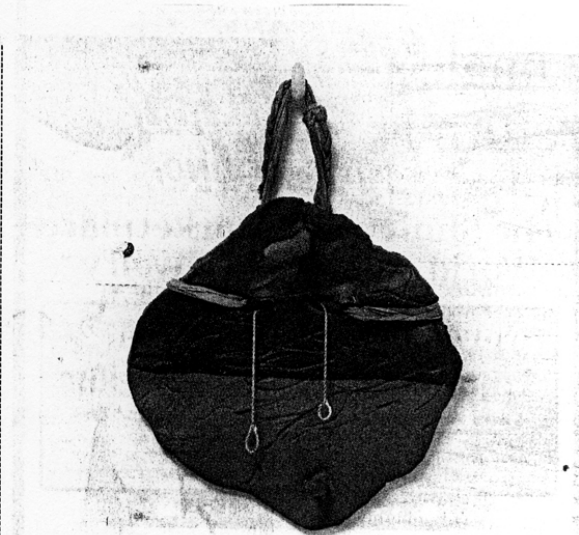
The knobs are gnarly, like petrified sweet potatoes or the horns of miniature rhinoceroses. Imagine Yayoi Kusama collaborating with Peter Voulkos, or Lee Bontecou designing a jeweler's display cases.

Sew Hoy's floor piece is a more traditional sculpture. But what it lacks in funky inventiveness it makes up for in scale. Shaped like a whirlpool, its serpentine spiral of flocked logs, foam-filled fabric tendrils and malignant lumps of stitched-together stuff pay homage to Bontecou and Louise Bourgeois while struggling to get out from under their shadows.

Unlike a lot of artists working the borders between art and de-

sign, Sew Hoy does not stop when the boundaries blur. That's where her nuanced and surprisingly mature works — she is still in graduate school, at Bard College in Massachusetts — start, taking viewers on wild rides through the uncharted territory where form and function collide, commingle, cross-pollinate.

Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, 6150 Wilshire Blvd., (323) 525-1755, through Dec. 22. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.karynlovegrovegallery.com



WALL SCULPTURE: "Mask" is one of 13 works by Anna Sew Hoy at Karyn Lovegrove Gallery through Dec. 22.