

07 / 07 / 2016

Art in America

“Anna Sew Hoy at Koenig and Clinton”

by William S. Smith



Anna Sew Hoy

at Koenig & Clinton,
through Jul. 29
459 West 19th Street

Denim is everywhere in Anna Sew Hoy’s “Invisible Tattoo,” serving as a stand-in for the human body and a protective casing for vulnerable insides. Piled on the floor are various “Denim Worms” (2016), long tubular soft sculptures made of jeans in a variety of colors and washes that have been stuffed with T-shirts and sewn together. Other works are more rigid, though no less biomorphic. The curvaceous, denim-clad stoneware forms in *Invisible Tattoo* (2016) resemble a figure in a seated yoga pose from the back. From the front they look like a hooded head with a large oval mirror where the face should be. *Invisible Tattoo* comprises a pair of these objects, each arranged alone on a separate cinderblock base and positioned to face one another. The work reflects on the act of looking, but only the stone-washed or reflective surfaces are visible; the interior is opaque, protected.

Anna Sew Hoy’s sculptures extend the surrealist-inflected tradition that Lucy Lippard termed “eccentric abstraction.” There are echoes of Eva Hesse’s work and, particularly in glazed stoneware pieces like *Woven Void* (2016), Barbara Hepworth’s carvings. Sew Hoy’s project takes such historical examples as guides to embodied experience in contemporary life. Some of the “Denim Worms” are draped over sculptural wall hooks: naturalistic flexing forearms cast in clear plastic. Cords of headphones and other electronic devices run through these arms like veins. The bare limbs, titled *Utopic Accumulation (Wall Hook)*, 2012-16, stand out in the exhibition not only because they are explicit figurative element amid otherwise abstract works, but also because, un-jeaned, they appear profoundly exposed.

—William S. Smith

Pictured: Anna Sew Hoy: *Invisible Tattoo*, 2016, stoneware, jeans, mirror and cinderblocks, 25 by 18 by 20 inches. Courtesy Koenig and Clinton, New York.