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Los Angeles Times

Art Review: Anna Sew Hoy's "Home Office" at Various Small Fires



Anna Sew Hoy "Home Office" installation view (Michael Underwood / underwoodpix.com / April 7, 2013)

By David Pagel
April 18, 2013, 10:45 a.m.

In the old days, worlds collided. Artists slammed incompatible realities together, pitting high against low, painting against screen printing, and functionalism against art for art's sake.

Today, that's impossible because the borders between art and design, as well as craft, entertainment, recreation, activism, and leisure have blurred beyond recognition. Worlds do not collide so much as they overlap, intermingle, cross-pollinate.

At Various Small Fires, Anna Sew Hoy lets contemporary art and boutique couture segue into each other, often creating intriguing hybrids that are both approachable



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and alien, their nothing-specialness abuzz with a subtle charge of strangeness. In a world overrun by partisan argumentation and know-it-all certainty, such accepting deftness is refreshing and sensible.

At first glance, Sew Hoy's "Home Office" could be mistaken for a start-up design store. Fashionably spare, stylishly nonchalant and arranged with casual elegance, her mix-and-match sculptural displays are presented as items to be picked up, tried out and tried on.

But you don't have to be an experienced shopper to know that Sew Hoy's arrangements of glazed stoneware orbs, adorned with denim, neoprene and flocking, and set atop multi-tiered pedestals and three-legged tables, are too funky, non-functional and clunky to be anything other than what they are: playful interruptions that combine a little of this and a little of that in ways that make you pay attention to the way you pay attention to the worlds around you.

(Various Small Fires, 1212-B Abbot Kinney Blvd., (310) 426-8040, through May 18. Closed Sunday-Tuesday. www.vsf.la/)