

# Flash Art

Stewart Uoo 47 Canal / New York

by Aaron Bogart

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Stewart Uoo "Curtains", installation view at 47 Canal, New York (2016) Courtesy of 47

Stewart Uoo is known for his glammed-up mannequins that hint at a scary future in which we have become so integrated with the things that shape us — fashion, technology and politics — that we no longer appear human. In "Curtains," the artist's second solo show at 47 Canal, Uoo uses a lighter tactic to hone in on the contemporary impressionability of self, turning men's clothes into three large wall sculptures. The sculptures are fun updates of earlier curtain works and, combined with three wall cut outs, set the stage for a critique of the uncertainty and pressure of being on display.

Each of the wall-mounted works consists of large, organic-looking soft sculptures made from a complex amalgam of all sorts of cloth and craft materials hanging from a tricked-out curtain rod. The rods themselves are made from plasma-cut steel, capped with decorative

finials and elaborately trimmed in a variety of fabrics. *Curtain Moment III (Eternity)* (2016), for example, is made from Polo shirts, dyed ostrich feathers, nylon and leather stretched over two entwined circles. The dangling part of this work might suggest wedding bands, but to me they look more like two linked gender symbols that have had their cross and arrow removed, creating a gender continuum.

Among the sculptures are several photographs of performer Contessa Stuto, shot in the gallery as a "rogue gallerina" — as the press release notes — performing atypical acts, like lounging on a desk. Also included are four textile-based works by Franklin Williams, Uoo's former art professor, that look like symmetrical abstractions of a morphing biological life form. Uoo has additionally cut three crude window-shaped holes into the walls, exposing the office and storage area. Being able to see through the walls opens up new avenues of exposure to the exhibition as a whole, creating an environment of exciting transparency where, to borrow a phrase of Hannah Arendt's, "being and appearing coincide."

# Art in America

## Stewart Uoo

at 47 Canal,  
through Feb. 14



Installation view of Stewart Uoo's exhibition "Curtains"; at 47 Canal, New York. Photo: Joerg Lohse.

The three wall-mounted sculptures in Stewart Uoo's "Curtain Moment" series have the dimensions and hardware of window treatments, but the frilly excess of their ornamentation evokes the sort of over-decorated theater where you might see an old operetta. This is a stage of the lower body. The curtains and trim are fashioned from spandex and jersey, the fabrics of men's underwear, but used in unwearable quantities and shapes; in one of the sculptures, the white elastic band from a pair of briefs snakes below the whole length of the rod. But the objects suspended at the center of each sculpture—sacs, eggs and bulging orbs, wound with strips of red and flecked with beads and crystals—suggest parts of the female reproductive system. Uoo's new works share motifs with textile assemblages from the 1960s and '70s by Franklin Williams, his former teacher, in which colorful pieces of cloth and twine are organized along the biosymmetry of the inner organs. A photo series hung amid the other works plays with the setting of the gallery; in one image, the model, a generously proportioned blonde, poses in worn black lace hose in 47 Canal's back office, with installation equipment hanging on a pegboard in the background. Rough square cuts through the office walls let the viewer peer into the back and connect the photo to its setting. Tempting as it might be to write it off as a dash of self-reflexive flair so common in Lower East Side galleries, the gesture orients the viewer in a real space of concealment and disclosure, the more intimate and fantastic analogue of which is imagined in the sculptures.—*Brian Droitcour*

# DOCUMENT

“Curtains” by Stewart Uoo

BY CYRIL DUVAL

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Cunt Mafia at Stewart Uoo's *Curtains*. Photography by Benedict Brink. Styling by Mark Jen Hsu.

I first met Stewart Uoo around 2010 in a downtown rave. The first thing I recall is his explanation of the way his American name (he is of Korean descent) was formed: how a careless/imaginative immigration officer's changed Woo into Uoo. On such a quirky anecdote, we quickly got along and since I've been following the always-seducing developments of his career.

Stewart's work is very gracious, inventive, and sophisticated. His new soft sculptures, *Curtains*, are composed of carefully deconstructed menswear garments methodically reassembled in the functionality and practicality of product design—but they stand nonetheless as unique and strikingly impressive artworks. In a conceptual glitch between the notions of meaning and function—not fundamentally different from sculptural shelving works by Haim Steinbach—here they act as display supports/pedestals bringing focus to the work of Uoo's mentor Franklin Williams, which sit as a part of the new artworks, combining the two's practice into a single entity hardly differentiable one from the other.

The aspect at the core of Uoo's work—which is to me perhaps the most compelling—is generosity. By showing his professor's work, which had not been exhibited in NYC for four decades, Uoo uses his own media momentum to bring attention on what exactly he desires the viewer to look. Similarly, Uoo's relation to the downtown culture that celebrates him today is similar: he uses his own “brand value” to celebrate the acknowledgment of that community. You might not necessarily see him out everywhere, but like Jacolby Satterwhite—another downtown darling who shares similar qualities to Uoo—he has been an influential cultural engine of the New York nightlife scene: in the early 2010's he began hosting the iconic XTAPUSSY rave stage with performance artist Marie Karlberg. Uoo also constantly embraces the queer culture and trans revolution by featuring and integrating more of his close friends, like Juliana Huxtable and De Se, in fashion-based art narratives transcending both discourses/aesthetics and presenting his sculptural works in a personal vision directed by the artist.

This unique story commissioned by *Document Journal* follows those steps by presenting a fictional fashion moment within Uoo's exhibition at 47 Canal. It features another nightlife icon, Contessa Stuto as her alter ego Cunt Mafia, and is photographed and styled by more of Uoo's fashion gang, Benedict Brink and Mark Jen Hsu.

*Stewart Uoo's exhibition Curtains is on show at 47 Canal until Feb 14, 2016.*