

Stewart Uoo

used

February 11–March 20, 2021

Discovering new interests, says Stewart Uoo, can be melancholy, when it suggests saying goodbye to others. What, the artist wonders, determines when something feels *over*? More importantly, what makes a person—someone like himself, for example—happy, *now*?

Maybe it's a bike ride through the Brooklyn streets near Uoo's studio, the sidewalks scrolling by. Detritus regenerates predictably, characterizing a block. Neighborhood pets act as parallel citizens to their less visible owners, imbued with emotion. Immigrant trees identical to those of childhood memories—historically cultivated for disparate yet analogous purposes—shed pretty, fan-shaped leaves. These objects of so many artists' everyday appear in countless works, lending themselves to an atomized understanding of a place, becoming at once iconic and all the more banal.

Couched between and pasted all over this world are visual mood stabilizers, attempts at softening life's hard edges with advertising. Across the East River, an office known for popularizing pill colors in subway ads describes itself as "a family of brands designed to help you enjoy daily life." This paradoxical promise is noticeably present in the Lower East Side, creating a consumer category from within. Such a branding scheme has come to represent the concept of defining a micro-generation by its spending habits, as well as the project of becoming happy through shedding once-sufficient attachments.

used, Uoo's fourth solo exhibition at 47 Canal, employs these balmy tropes of generational burnout, layering them atop naturally occurring comforts with which this burned-out generation regularly interfaces. A dream sidewalk constructed from cement is realized in the gallery, with some synapses cross-wired. Ginkgo leaves and pigeon feathers are artificialized on surfaces, echoing the decorative motifs they unintentionally produce in countless images of Brooklyn streets. Statues and found objects reconstitute artifacts of familiarity in high-gloss or fine finishes. Resin-cast pieces are hollow by design—a traffic cone, a tire, a fire hydrant, a newspaper bag—promising safety with their emptiness, or their availability to be filled. Found videos of pets stand at the intersection of community-building and promotion.

Confronting personal metamorphoses, Uoo redefines again what is deemed meaningful to him now—what no longer fascinates, and why. Noticing some equivalence between what induces contentedness and the creativity targeting his subset, he takes pleasure in recognizing moments of expression, obsession, and delusion—how each might be increasingly inextricable.

—Natasha Stagg

Stewart Uoo (b. 1985) lives and works in New York City. He has participated in group exhibitions at K11 Art Museum, Shanghai; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; Aishti Foundation, Jal el Dib, Lebanon; MoMA PS1, New York; ICA London; the Fridericianum, Kassel;

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the 10th Gwangju Biennale; the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Kunsthalle Oslo. His work is also included in several public collections including the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Aishti Foundation, Jal el Dib, Lebanon; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Rubell Family Collection, Miami.