

Flash Art

Stewart Uoo 47 Canal / New York

by Aaron Bogart

March-April 2016



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."