

ARTFORUM



Left: Michelle Abeles, David Benjamin Sherry, Carissa Rodriguez, Lisa Jo, and Amy Yao, Poster for ANOTHER MASTERPIECE!!, 2011. Right: Geoff Han and Amy Yao, Invitation Card for ANOTHER MASTERPIECE!!, 2011.

Amy Yao

09.08.11

Amy Yao is a New York–based artist whose practice includes stints as a sculptor, zine publisher, and umbrella maker. For her latest project, ANOTHER MASTERPIECE!!, she has collaborated with the design studio and storefront space JF & SON and Travis Boyer’s MFT to design a collection of clothing based on the chance encounter of a sewing machine and a banana on a kitchen table. Yao will stage a performance–runway show at the store featuring her work on September 8.

I’M INTERESTED in combinations that trigger something in our minds where suddenly there is a joke where there wasn’t before. It’s exciting that some people are going to think this is funny and others will find it to be made in poor taste.

The presentation of these works will be a performance in and of itself. As part of the presentation, a sequined runway and curtains will be on display, which represents a continuation of my work in “The Real Housewives” exhibition at New Jersey in Basel from last winter. The dimensions of the curtains are based on the windows of my previous home in Phoenix. That home was a single-family unit track home designed by midcentury modern architect Ralph Haver, whose work is somewhat obscure in the architecture world but is trendy and sought-after in Phoenix. Like the myth of Mies’s Farnsworth house, some occupants desired privacy in a house that was designed to be transparent, privileging the open floor plan. To address this problem, many homeowners installed curtains and vertical blinds, which seemed at odds with the owners’ fetishistic desire for modern design. My curtains look like they might have been made by a glamorous Arizonan housewife.

I prefer work that can expand into the environment or relate to utilitarian objects—a kind of reversed discrepancy. In the same way that my art can become activated in relation to its context, the clothing that I made in collaboration with JF & SON is activated as it is worn. I don’t see the garments as interpretations of my sculpture but rather as artworks themselves in a different form. For instance, the dress is an object to be looked at, but it can be funny when worn, because the hair falls just below the waistline, resembling overgrowth of pubic hair. The titles for the garments are also important—*YYSL, Whore Moans, Mother-in-Law* . . .

I’m interested in going over the top and being excessive in using signs and identity codes. Over the years, I’ve amassed a collection of music with an Orientalist theme, songs featuring so-called Oriental sounds in them, such as the gong that becomes a grotesque marker of Western/Eastern difference. There’s an Alex Chilton song called “Bangkok” where he talks about “making love the Japanese way.” Or there’s the David Bowie song “China Girl.” And then there’s Siouxsie and the Banshees’ “Hong Kong Gardens.” All of those songs reference Western views on the Asian through a flagrant, shameless use of extra instruments and overconnoted melodies. I thought it would be funny to play with that format and have all Asian models and this particular music at the presentation. Plus, it’s a fashion show, so you always have to have free stuff. That’s the number one reason to go—for the tote bag.

— As told to John Arthur Peetz