

Object & Thing Brings Wacky and Wonderful Works to the Independent Art Fair

BY MEL STUDACH MARCH 5, 2020



Roy McMakin, *A Pair of Lamps With Bronze Vases Cast From a Vase I Bought a Long Time Ago*, 2018, bronze, enamel on poplar, steel, fabric, pedestal lamp: 19.5 x 14.5 x 10 inches, singular lamp: 19.5 x 10 x 10 inches

When art gallery Karma dropped off the work of artist Dike Blair earlier this week at New York’s Space Studios, a debate ensued. “It’s so realistic that I questioned whether we should leave it out as the cleaners come through,” Abby Bangser, founder of art and design fair *Object & Thing*, tells AD PRO of the glass sculpture that looks exactly like a Windex bottle. Expectant visitors can however “rest assured” that the piece survived, she adds, thanks to the team’s decision to pack the work away until tomorrow, when Blair’s sculpture will join nearly 80 other works on display.

Blair’s work epitomizes the beauty of the event’s collaborative effort. His sculptures, which often depict items brought to life from the American artist’s tableaus, are rarely shown at art fair settings such as Independent, where *Object & Thing* is set to pop up this weekend. “Object-based works often get lost from being presented, which is why we started this fair,” says Bangser. “When you go to studios, it’s there and important to the artist, but galleries rarely show them.”

Bangser and Rafael de Cárdenas, an AD100 architect and the fair’s artistic director, developed the section’s contributor list by reaching out to Independent’s exhibitors for object-based submissions. From there, the duo contacted design galleries, R & Company and Salon 94 among them, to layer in additional elements. “We are always looking at an equal balance of art and design and to present the works together without hierarchy or separation,” says de Cárdenas to AD PRO of the fair, which returns for its official second edition in May.

A sense of humor is woven throughout *Object & Thing*’s current effort, as Bangser points out during a tour of the showcase. Among the pieces seen are exaggerated human forms, such as the terra-cotta vases in the shape of a nose, a foot, and a tooth by BNAG, a firm founded by artist duo Oliver-Selim Boualam and Lukas Marstaller. Then there’s the work of British designer James Shaw, whose comedic style is more observational, giving a new perspective to familiar forms. “He developed this incredible tool that extrudes recycled plastics as though a bag of icing piping a cake,” de Cárdenas explains. The process takes shape in a whimsically hued and Baroque-inspired tableware set—tureen, candelabra, and jug included. “Normally, this would be an elegant, solid silver piece, and here it is in pastel plastic,” adds Bangser, as though offering a punch line.

But there’s beauty out there too. Similar to Blair’s work, a pair of lamps by Roy McMakin is like a canvas brought to life. “The bronze vases are so beautifully crafted, as though a scene in a Giorgio Morandi painting,” says Bangser. She continues on to Martin Puryear’s *One-Handed Stools*, which have been hand-painted in milk paint and produced in limited edition for the New Museum of Contemporary Art. Yet another striking set of designs, in a sea of impressive options.