

ARTISTS RECLAIM THE IDEA OF RECLAIMED MATERIALS IN /FOUND/

By Jevijoe Vitug

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Curated by Aurore Giguet, */found/* is a substantial and polished demonstration of mostly three-dimensional wall-bound works by three Las Vegas artists: [Troy Gillett](#), [DK Sole](#) and the late Jean Giguet.

The show's title is a play on the term "found object," which describes art created from existing everyday materials. In the early 20th century, artists tested academic traditions by declaring everyday objects as art. Whereas past artists trumpeted the inherent aesthetic value of these materials, contemporary artists are more interested in detaching an object from its original purpose. In a process called "metempsychosis," the artists' personal experience transmigrates to these embedded objects, as is evident in the works on view.

Installed on the wall as if they were one large piece, Sole's 14 assemblages are made of random things that range from mundane to bizarre. Plastic beads, yarn, poster paper, rubber bands, feathers, adhesives, wax, bark, bubble wrap and plastic straws are cleverly presented in a forensic style format.

In her work entitled "odd that their acquaintance was so slight" (2014), Sole has hung double-sided tape in a way that resembles a winged insect undergoing metamorphosis. Without any visible sign of workmanship, the piece looks like it was picked up randomly from a trash bin. But what's interesting here is the assertion of the term "acquaintance." Isn't it strange that an insignificant item now becomes a work of art, thus making an acquaintance with a well-lit gallery wall?

Perhaps the uncanniest pieces in the show are the works of Jean Giguet, the curator's late father. In "Prostitution" (1993) and "Unknown" (1994)—comprised of found materials and photographic images of nuclear testing sites in Nevada and the Mojave Desert—Jean offers an enthralling commentary with social and

historical underpinnings. His *Thinking of You* painting series seems like vandalized or shotgunned paintings of Barnett Newman. What appears abstract turns out to be actual surfaces of the “real thing”—discarded plywood, painted panel boards and other found materials—thus deconstructing the boundary between abstraction and representation. Is Jean’s work a critique of the traditional notion that abstract art should be independent from the real world? Is it a farewell to the decadeslong romance with Modernism? As Picasso once said, “In art, one has to kill one’s father.”

Every piece of work here has a story to tell. Each one explores the cognitive, aesthetic and momentous aspects of the found materials. Case in point, Gillett’s minimalistic “Unknown” (2001) is a mirror with a repurposed shovel that was used in groundbreaking ceremonies. The piece resembles a memorial plaque and is similar to those gravestones made of black granite. Its flawless reflective surface leads you to ask, “Am I staring into the object or am I staring at myself?” It provides the viewer with a moment of reflection, both literally and figuratively.

Located in a small room, Gillett’s powerful “Alternating Current” (2011) is a chair made of repurposed Douglas fir wood and leather straps. According to the artist, the work is an homage to the war of currents between Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla. But it most strongly evokes an electric chair. The sculpture plays on the notion of repurposing: The original intent of electricity was to improve the quality of life, but years later it was “repurposed” for other uses, including execution.

The common thread in */found/* is the ability of the three artists to bring dark humor in an elegant and sly manner. There’s Sole’s usage of witty and humorous titles; Jean’s light take on serious, often-controversial subjects; and Gillett’s word play on meanings. Ultimately, terms such as “found,” “repurposed” and “reclaimed” transcend their environmental definitions to take on deeper psychological and even poetic meanings.

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at MCQ Fine Art Advisory, 620 S. 7th St., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon-Fri through April 15, 366-9339, MCQFineArt.com.