

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Wallpaper*
Junk Rocker
Harriet Lloyd-Smith
23 September 2019

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Junk rocker: artist Holly Hendry's new solo show conveys her taste for waste



Image: Holly Hendry at the jail make fabrication studio in south London with part of her new piece, *The Dump is Full of Images*, which involves an artificial skin, embedded with debris, being conveyed around a steel framework, while being pulled, stretched and squeezed to reveal images and objects. Photography: Nick Ballon

in London's Selfridges in memory of the digger. The multilayered sculpture was embedded with 'things that don't disappear', such as chewed gum and fake nails – tokens of disposability and consumption staged within a temple to consumerism.

In 2013, a 140m-long digger named Phyllis completed her 4.2-mile tunnel dig for London's Crossrail. At the finish line, job done, she had to dig her own grave. Deemed too heavy to be extricated, she was cast aside, gutted of valuable parts and bricked over. Phyllis' plight struck a chord with British artist Holly Hendry – so much so that, last year, she installed a work

Since graduating from the RCA in 2016, Hendry has enjoyed a sharp ascent, with major solo shows in Berlin, Rome and, most notably, at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, making an impact with large, site-specific installations on themes of decay, the body and material reuse.



Image: Hendry layers the skin-like belt using a combination of materials, including silicone, which are then joined to form a continuous strip. Photography: Nick Ballon

Hendry is not afraid of going big and thinking deep. *Homeostasis*, created as part of a residency at Sharjah Art Foundation in 2014, involved a galvanised steel pipe snaking around a courtyard, funnelling a continuous flow of air, inspired by the Barjeels (wind towers) of the Middle East. *Cenotaph*, a series of sculptural 'pipe sections' for the 2018 Liverpool Biennial, delved into the history of the city's hollow underground architecture, including the enigmatic

Williamson tunnels and the old dock entombed under the Liverpool One shopping centre. 'I was thinking about the mucky sides of the city, what we brush under the surface,' she recalls.

Hendry's taste for waste and ability to get deep under the skin of her subjects has led her down another path, to a major solo show at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, *The Dump is Full of Images*, opening later this month. Inside her Woolwich studio, located in a wasteland of derelict factories, Hendry's YSP commission is still under construction, but gaining traction. 'It feels ridiculous that an idea in your head becomes this big conversation; it's terrifying and exhilarating,' she says, her eyes darting around her space scattered with ambiguous silicone body parts – a taste of what's to come.

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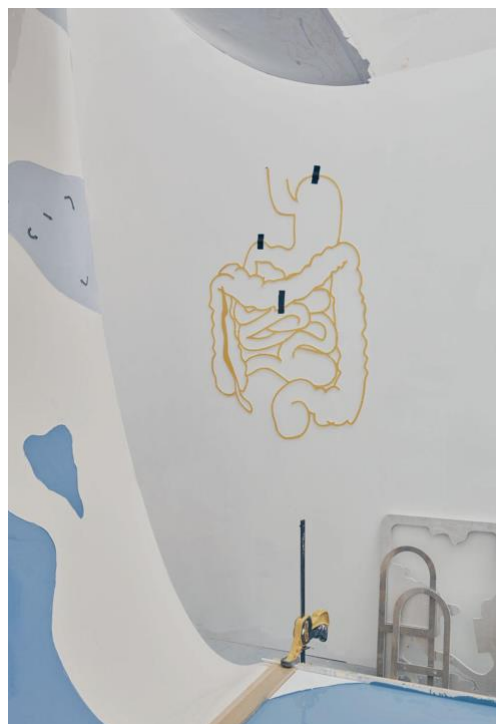


Image: A plastic anatomical inlay that will be used to create images in the belt. Photography: Nick Ballon

YSP is an apt stage for Hendry's proposed diorama, which responds to Feilden Fowles' design of The Weston, the park's much-praised new visitor centre, with its undulating roof windows and semi-submergence in a landscape of sculptural stardom. 'I'm doing a sculpture made of reused plastics and crap next to a Henry Moore that lasts for eternity in bronze.'

In its entirety, the piece is an 8m-long 'monstrous' human body lying supine. But what might appear to be a set menu of moving parts is an all-you-can-eat buffet of sickly sweet metaphors. The title is drawn from the epilogue of *The Real Thing*, a study of technology and culture by the American scholar Miles Orvell. 'He talks about junk as a system of disorder, but also as a way to look at something in a different light,' she says. 'I'm trying to do the same with materials'.

Within the installation's Perspex and steel framework, things get more complex. A reeling conveyor belt of silicone 'skin' is yanked, warped and continually 'regurgitated' on steel rollers, resembling an autopsy, a

Heath Robinson-esque printing press, or a digestive system, depending on your angle or disposition. It's an impressive contraption for an artist who has never used motors before. 'I'm not sure how I feel about kinetic sculpture,' Hendry admits. 'It's a big risk, but important in that suggestion of life.'



Image: Studies and sources of inspiration for *The Dump is Full of Images* on the wall of Henry's studio, including *The Unswept Floor*, a now-lost mosaic by Sosus of Pergamon; *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* by Caravaggio; and *Wunder in Uns* (1923), Plate III, redrawn from illustrations. Photography: Nick Ballon

The belt itself is mural-like, barnacled with whatever debris is to hand: studio leftovers, bits of pen and wrappers embedded in block-coloured anatomical shapes like human teeth and a bowel. In developing the artificial skin, Hendry picked the brain of Professor Parik Goswami of the Institute of Skin Integrity and Infection Prevention at the University of Huddersfield. His research group's innovative materials involve a cocktail of thermoplastics, which can be used as synthetic membranes for various medical applications. 'It's about the skin as a barrier, boundary and edge,' says Hendry.

The artist's influences are extensive and tricky to boil down. She has a thing for holy relics and their legitimacy (or lack thereof). 'There are like five Jesus' foreskins,' she says. 'It's not about authenticity, it's about what it stands for.' Her installation's Perspex 'containers' exalt the skin

belt like an artefact in a museum vitrine. 'It's the grisly idea of dying and going into the ground, then coming from the ground and being made into objects,' says Hendry, whose conversation can turn from laughter to death, Vitruvius to digestion in a nanosecond.

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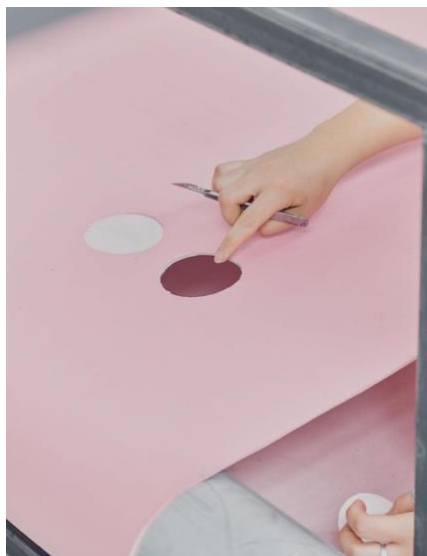


Image: Cutting out shapes in the skin-like belt. Photography: Nick Ballon

Theory is important, like Maggie Kilgour's treatise on 'incorporation' in *From Communion To Cannibalism*, or Rem Koolhaas' dissection of urbanism in *Junkspace*. There's a hint of Louise Bourgeois, mixed with Rebecca Horn's sculptural precision and flecks of Philip Guston's cartoonish vulgarity, if his characters were prised from the canvas and mashed into a pulp. The most direct link is Franz West, but a little cleaner, calmer and more lucid. 'Artists like [West] give you permission to go to places you thought were too dumb,' she says.

Whether it's Phyllis the digging machine, the abstruse tunnels beneath the city of Liverpool, or a rotating belt of plastic remains, Hendry has a knack for animating inanimate objects as relics of lives lived. You'll leave her YSP installation with much food for thought, the sour tang of consumerism and an uneasy awareness of 'being a body with a skin'. All this from a mild-mannered

artist who doesn't look capable of peeling the skin off a rice pudding.