Material Deviance
Alexis Wilkinson

The artists included in Material Deviance use the quotidian, unassuming stuff of life and its circulation as a means of engaging larger social and infrastructural processes. They look to irregularities, gaps, residues, and altered states, whether found or enacted, as material traces of latent histories and underlying systems of power to expose the invisible forces of regulation, value, and control. While such systems inevitably shape the movement of bodies and things through the world—from the level of the individual to the social—the works on view reveal the cracks through which deviant modes of being and perceiving can emerge.

In the context of the exhibition, “deviance” is used to designate the counter-movements and improvisational maneuvers that oppose, or otherwise refuse, the organizational structures supporting systems of power. The conventional definition of the term refers to an act outside of or against accepted social norms. Derived from the Latin deviare, to turn aside or away, it signals an off-centered, imprecise, or erroneous trajectory. Turning, of course, also implies a circular, pivoting, revolving motion, as much a modification as an about-face. Deviance thus relates to movement and change, marking a force associated with the reorientation and circulation of things outside of their usual course.

Some of the artists actively produce material dissonance: rearranging narratives, altering properties, leaving traces, and otherwise rendering the familiar strange. This group of artists highlights the copious information contained in the materials that surround us, demonstrating the ways that things can be manipulated to escape or subvert the conditions that produce and circulate them. Other artists mine the inherent glitches and irregularities they find in their materials, evidence that things—like bodies—always manage to exceed, and often disrupt, the systems that attempt to contain them.

The strange beauty of the distorted pennies seen in Virginia Lee Montgomery’s video and sculptural work arises from a kind of double glitch. A rare mechanical failure of the US Mint caused off-center stamping, producing a misshapen coin that reveals its nude copper planchet. While safeguards are in place to destroy error coins prior to a kind of double glitch. A rare mechanical failure of the US Mint caused off-center stamping, producing a misshapen coin that reveals its nude copper planchet. While safeguards are in place to destroy error coins prior to
purpose of the material domains of domestic craft. In oscillating between parts and a whole, looking at and looking through, standing in for the body and in physical relationship to it, Harrod’s work manifests a logic of multiplicity that denies a singular reading or classification. Olivia Booth’s glasses work evokes a host of associations: eccentric lamp fixtures, strange and fragile instruments, elegant chemistry experiments, and decorative apparatuses. In this way, Booth unsettles a long history of the use of glass as a mechanism of display and as a sculptural material, as well as its more recent application in the fabrication of communication devices and other technologies. Configurations of tube lamps support vessels that might hold fiber-optic cables or melted alchemical mixtures of reflective surfaces. Slumped mirrors and smartphone screens reveal the changes in coloration and distortions of form that result when glass is exposed to heat, making visible the material conditions of global production, trade, and circulation embedded in the chemical properties of the familiar surfaces we encounter daily. The elements central to these works—mirrors, glass, and light—filter our optical experience of the world, and lead the viewer to look at, into, and through several materials at once, making indeterminate the boundaries between interior and exterior, material and form. While Booth brings into focus the apparatuses that shape vision, Crystal Z Campbell excavates images and historical documents to explore the impact of forceful and alienating figures on the population of the night sky. Her installation places past and present in dialogue, weaving together archival material with fictional narrative. The work can be seen as an exchange between Campbell and the uncredited filmmaker of an untitled 35mm film salvaged from the now-defunct Slave Theater, once a site of activism and community empowerment in the historically black neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant in the ’70s and ’80s. Since its production, the film reel has sustained severe damage, causing its images to be discolored or entirely dissolved. Using two slide projectors,
Campbell combines film stills, archival images, elements from the present, references to martial arts and the destroyed city of Pompeii, and a narrative soundtrack. The result draws connections between the destruction of the film’s material and communities contending with the forces of gentrification.

Ilana Harris-Babou’s video work appropriates the format of the home improvement show. The episode features the hosts—the artist and her mother— instructing viewers on how to execute standard construction tasks aimed at finishing a basement wall. As the video progresses, they misuse renovation materials and techniques, performing futile and sometimes absurd tasks. In this way, the work privileges the performance of labor, potential, and intimacy over practical improvement or a finished job. Dialogue slips between improvisation, real and constructed identities, candid conversations, and excerpts of texts by Audre Lorde, Marcus Garvey, Reconstruction Era field orders, the testimonies of nineteenth-century black homesteaders, and This Old House episodes. In the end, the aspirational complex exemplified by the conventional home improvement show, a paradigmatic marker of the American dream, is turned on its head.

Also evolving a familiar yet strange interior space, Lauren Bakst & Yuri Masnyj’s installation is populated with nearly recognizable items. Utilizing a set of movable objects that serve as both prop and sculpture, the artists investigate the slippery relationship between bodies and objects. Shelves support this collection of objects, which reference domestic items, elemental shapes, and natural forms, veering from the familiar to the strange by way of nearly recognizable items. Utilizing a set of movable objects that serve as both prop and sculpture, the artists collapse fiction, reality, metaphor, and historical account, strategic slippages emerge in the traces of bodily contact with objects encountered in daily life, whether pennies, rocks, bus seats, smartphones, or stimulated and scratched; handheld sculptures are caressed, arranged, and rearranged; or groups of bodies interact.

The ocean, an expanse where global capital flows are entangled with the history of colonial movement, is also a fragrant haze. In these ways, the artists included in the exhibition propose that knowing is related to feeling, and intimacy over practical improvement or a finished job. Dialogue slips between improvisation, real and constructed identities, candid conversations, and excerpts of texts by Audre Lorde, Marcus Garvey, Reconstruction Era field orders, the testimonies of nineteenth-century black homesteaders, and This Old House episodes. In the end, the aspirational complex exemplified by the conventional home improvement show, a paradigmatic marker of the American dream, is turned on its head.

Exploring the relationship between components and the whole, the solo body and the ensemble, the cellular and the astronomical, Kim Brandt’s work is performed at 4pm every day the exhibition is open. Informed by individual and collective bodies’ somatic responses to specific spaces and the internal sensory experience of a dancer, the work uses both sculptural and visual language. Following the organizing mechanism of the loop or cycle, dancers carry out solos in the basement, venturing in and out of collective forms to focus on a different body part, sometimes weekly. While the scores will naturally be carried out differently each day, they all follow the same trajectory, and always culminate at the end of the week as an accumulation. The work operates in a mode of continued and evolving presence alongside the other works in the galleries, evading the conventional temporal structures that frame both performance and exhibitions. Using repetition, duration, and presence, Brandt proposes new ways of seeing that emphasize physical encounters and ongoing change.

Assembling cast-off, rejected, and objected materials, Marian Tubbs troubles normative ascriptions of value through a material exploration of the circuitous relationships between people, ecosystems, and trash. Considering routes that discarded plastics take as they move through various systems, Tubbs draws connections between the continual flows of capital, water, and trash. In plastic assemblages and hybrid objects that merge organic matter with discarded waste, Tubbs points to the ecological reality of the global circulation of plastics in large bodies of water by way of seductive abstraction and messy elegance. Adorning industrial grids that obstruct a straightforward passage through space, the works encourage an encounter in dialogue with the body.

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Kate Newby, *Not this time, not for me.*, 2017, installation view.
Jessica Vaughn, *Surplus*: Tropicana Grey No. 103; Newport Cadet Blue No. 688; Oxen Black No. 001; Oxen Dark Blue No. 642; Oxen Gray No. 672, 2016–17, installation view.

Jessica Vaughn, *After Willis (rubbed, used and moved) #004*, 2017, detail.

Kate Newby, *My list of places to drop in on regularly*, 2017, detail.
SculptureCenter In Practice: Material Deviance

Jesse Harrod, Taught tight tender sway, 2017, installation view.

Marian Tubbs, installation view.
SculptureCenter In Practice: Material Deviance


Lauren Bakst & Yuri Masnyj
Temporary Walls, 2017
Installation and performance
30 minutes; dimensions variable
Two-channel audio, wood, paper, plaster, metal, acrylic paint, ink, graphite

Olivia Booth
Go Easy With Me I, 2017
Glass (melted vase, borosilicate), microfilament, paint, metal, electrical
60 x 40 x 12 inches
(152.4 x 101.6 x 30.5 cm)

Go Easy With Me II, 2017
Glass (melted vases, melted computer screens, borosilicate), metal, electrical
46 x 26 inches (116.8 x 66 cm)

Go Easy With Me III, 2017
Glass (melted vases, melted computer screens, borosilicate), metal, electrical
24 x 12 x 15 inches
(61 x 30.5 x 38.1 cm)

Go Easy With Me IV, 2017
Glass (melted vases, melted iPhone screens, melted mirror, rondel, “fiberoptic”), plastic stands, metal, electrical
90 x 18 x 7 inches
(228.6 x 45.7 x 17.8 cm)

Glass fabrication assistance by Nicole Stahl and Neptune Glassworks, Los Angeles

Kim Brandt
The Volume, 2017
Performance, first floor and lower level
Daily at 4pm, duration variable
Performed by Anna Adams Stark, Lydia Adler Orrent, Liz Charky, Meg Cleary, Jessica Cook, Courtney Cooke, Leslie Cuyjet, Katie Dean, Green Dworman, Ayaro Elson, Kay Ottinger, Nora Stephens and Tara Willis

Crystal Z Campbell
Go-Rilla Means War, 2017
35mm slides, 35mm slide projectors, custom seating, paint, LEDs, stereo sound, speakers
365 seconds

Production assistance by Ezer Longinus, Brooklyn Research, Gammatech; and Hardesty Center for Fab Lab, Tulsa. Research assistance by Paley Center for Media, Los Angeles; Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; Brooklyn Public Library; Brooklyn Historical Society; The Slave #1 Theater and Slave #2 Theater; University of Tulsa. Additional support by the Foundation for Contemporary Arts; Tulsa Artist Fellowship; Yaddo; Mondriaan Fonds; Living Arts; Circle Cinema, Tulsa

Danielle Dean
True Red Ruin (Elmina Castle), 2017
HD video; two-channel digital video installation
9:39 minutes

Performers: Ashstress Agwunobi, Adriane Campbell, Danielle Dean, Twiana Flowers, Kalia Flowers, Christopher Warren; Camera: Sharad Patel; Camera assistance: Stephen Wilson; Sound: Tish Stringer; Sound mix: Aidan Reynolds; Color grade: Paul Kyle; Props: Joel Freeman

Checklist of Works in the Exhibition

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Ilana Harris-Babou  
*Finishing A Raw Basement*, 2017  
HD video  
6:41 minutes

Jesse Harrod  
*Taught tight tender sway*, 2017  
Paracord, rope, cock rings, acrylic  
Dimensions variable

Candice Lin and Patrick Staff  
*A Fine Hormonal Mist*, 2017  
Printed rolling paper, hops, licorice root, black cohosh root, dong quai  
Dimensions variable

Hormonal System, 2017  
Wood, rebar, bailing wire, clamps, epoxy putty, rope, buckets, bungee cords, glass jars, plastic jugs, plastic funnel, plastic tubing, zip ties, aluminum ducting, fog machine, fog fluid, hops, licorice root, black cohosh root, dong quai, vodka, rope, wire, buckets  
Dimensions variable

Virginia Lee Montgomery  
*Beyond means*, 2017  
HD video  
2:16 minutes

Lincoln looks at the moon, 2017  
Copper alloy misprints, copper rods  
1 x 7.5 x 5 inches  
(2.5 x 19.1 x 12.7 cm)

Kate Newby  
*A desert, plain and dry.*, 2017  
Pit fired stoneware, salt fired stoneware, porcelain, earthenware, carved bricks, sand  
Dimensions variable

My list of places to drop in on regularly., 2017  
Hand-dyed cotton rope, hand-dyed silk thread, pink silver, silver, white brass, bronze  
Dimensions variable

Not this time, not for me., 2017  
Mortar, concrete pigment, silver, white brass, bronze, porcelain, cotton rope, blown glass, glass, stoneware  
Dimensions variable  
Glass fabrication by Leo Tecosky

Glass  
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Glass fabrication by Leo Tecosky

Barb Smith  
*Untitled*, 2017  
Memory foam, Aqua-Resin, impressions from two bodies  
70 x 52 x 48 inches  
(177.8 x 132.1 x 121.9 cm)  
Courtesy the artist and Páramo, Guadalajara, Mexico

Made in collaboration with Jean-Jacques du Plessis

Marian Tubbs  
anagram.*, 2017  
Fiberglass, Aqua-Resin, orchid moss, ice balls, hair dye, pigment, silicone  
21 x 13 x 2 inches (53.3 x 33 x 5.1 cm)

Ptilonorhynchidae, 2017  
Steel, found ocean vortex material and growths, dried orchid moss, pigment print on silk, Aqua-Resin, fiberglass, silicone, speaker wire, pigment, hair dye  
50 x 42 x 7 inches  
(127 x 106.7 x 17.8 cm)

she was entirely lovely yet so unlikable, 2017  
Steel, found ocean vortex material and growths, dried orchid moss, orchid, Aqua-Resin, fiberglass, silicone, speaker wire, pigment, hair dye  
56 x 60 x 8 inches  
(142.2 x 152.4 x 20.3 cm)

stress less, 2017  
Fiberglass, Aqua-Resin, silicone, speaker wire, pigment, hair dye, ice ball  
13.5 x 17 x 4 inches  
(34.3 x 43.2 x 10.2 cm)

vortex drip, 2017  
Silicone, pigment, orchid moss, orchid  
45 x 5.5 x 0.25 inches  
(114.3 x 14 x 0.6 cm)

All works courtesy the artist and ltd Los Angeles

Jessica Vaughn  
*After Willis (rubbed, used and moved) #004*, 2017  
Twelve individual pairs of used machine-fabricated public transit train seats made of fiberglass and upholstery (Chicago Transit Authority 1998–2007)  
Dimensions variable

Surplus: Tropicana Grey No.103; Newport Cadet Blue No. 688; Oxen Black No. 001; Oxen Dark Blue No. 642; Oxen Gray No. 672., 2016–17  
Six vinyl scraps procured from manufacturer (09/2015-11/2016) adhered to found plexiglass  
Five pairs; each pair 59 x 24 x 0.5 inches (149.9 x 61 x 1.3 cm)

Except where noted, all works courtesy the artists