

Your Personal Hang-Ups: Gail M. Brown's Curator's Essay

Internationally, handmade objects for domestic spaces offer insight about the time and place. In addition to serving a tribal function, they enrich the sense of particular history and cultural identity. Well-crafted, contemporary objects hold the same promise of visual and tactile significance: in the best scenario one can anticipate an experience of compelling seduction and ongoing resonance, by the artists' individually and as a group overview. Certain unique works defy the vagaries of commercial fashion; they endure and mark the makers' individuality and visual voices.

Sometimes these objects begin with an invitation, an external, unlimited provocation from a curator to a themed exhibition: a challenge. Ideally, once taken hold, the artist's ongoing ideas develop into an authentic, inspired extension of their recognizable vocabulary incorporating that something new, which the inviter was hoping to stimulate. This assimilation can result in both familiar yet unexpected forms (for maker and curator alike). In the evolution of a group exhibition, the curator seeks to attract the potential diversity of ideas and experience which her wish list of carefully selected, particular artists promises. Acceptances pile up, reiterating enthusiasm and the seeds of ideas. And rarely is she disappointed. Everyone is a vital page in the story the curator hopes to chronicle.

Gowdy Duncan_Autumn and Larimore Jack_Balance Is A Verb

This exhibition topic, *YOUR PERSONAL HANG-UPS*, was conceived with open ended expectations, to entice layers of interpretation, personal riffs and then unexpected resolutions, as well as optional intentions, references and emphasis on or degrees of functionality, the still-present cornerstone of the Decorative Arts continuum.

Excerpts from the invitation:

**I am interested in your personal hang-ups:
not your lifetime neuroses
but your (ideal) hat, coat and/or clothes tree or hanger,
wall hooks, free standing pole, rack, stand or small wall system.
And/or perhaps a companion cane and/or umbrella stand.**

We all need visual and organizational 'cues' in our domestic environments to enhance and support our personal material culture. What could be more enticing to attract those cues than a unique clothes tree/hanger/polea linear form of grace, personality and function in your visual vocabulary to lure attention and a hands-on relationship.....a well conceived and beautifully crafted object of utility and grace, combined with aesthetic interest as the best of craft traditions share...a seductive object with intended tactile interaction...

Ferrell Brian_Telephone Desk 3 and Furqueron Reagan_Walking Stick Caddy

an object to entice our conscious appreciation and heightened awareness of the repetitive task: a useful object of imagination, invention and function... an object of come-hither attraction to non-verbally remind us of the inherently personal relationship with handmade, unique objects in the decorative arts continuum.....

This is to invite your participation with one inventive form addressing this challenge for a group exhibition I am curating at the Wood Turning Center (the invitation was issued in 2010, prior to the name change to the Center For Art In Wood) in Philadelphia.

***YOUR PERSONAL HANG-UPS* is scheduled for exhibition November 2012- February 2013. I do hope this entices your interest.**

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McClennan_ Miro Miro and Hudnall Katie_ HMS Katie

I have known and watched your stellar ideas and forms evolve. I am excited by the potential of this functional form- a "hang-up"- as a springboard for your vocabulary. I am inviting masters, mid-career artists and introducing emerging makers. I envision an exhibition with a tantalizing array of objects to serve everyday, domestic, organizational functions. With your participation, the results will consciously enhance the dulllest day! I do hope your interest has been whetted and honed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Gail M. Brown
Craft

Curator of Contemporary

As intended, the title and description led to a range of intelligent, serious, refined or quirky, satiric and audacious interpretations, from the familiar to the funky, the known to the new,

Eriksmoen_Ashley_ Lift full view

from utility to the unexpected; and diverse materials and kinds of objects. The quixotic title seemed to provide permission and opportunity for some, well known for studio furniture, to stray from functionality to works of conceptual commentary about life issues. These new sculptural forms with roots embedded in utility offer witty, intellectual reflections about the dual/parallel definitions of 'hang-ups.'

Tom_Loesser_ Blue-Black-Yellow

Many works are titled and all are accompanied by artist statements- from brief introductions to heartfelt personal narratives; from references to craft and art history to deeply personal references.

After experiencing the exhibition as a gallery viewer, one will be enticed to explore the back story of chosen makers to discover rivetingly imaginative bodies of earlier work crafted in wood and other companionable materials, resumes of masterful length, others of mid-career accomplishment and introductions to emerging artists.

Some makers have revisited and refined ongoing vocabularies, others pushed ahead to topple and expand the familiar to become the something new. To that investigation, one could perhaps ask "what makes an object "compelling?" And what makes work "memorable?" The answers would be entwined with one's own responses and musings on the implicit pleasures of both the presence and daily use of these kinds of handmade, one-of-a-kind forms.

The breath and diversity of *YOUR PERSONAL HANG-UPS* also illustrates the richness of imaginative possibilities: explore the concepts, read the titles and artist statements, consider the forms, the personalities and visual vocabularies, imagine the function fulfilled, appreciate the craftsmanship and savor the essence: the resolve and the "unexpectedness" this curator always anticipates.

ALL are surely 'hung up' on their ideas.

All celebrate our tactile, domestic material culture.

All invite our experience: Please **touch** and interact.

We are visually seduced, wildly enticed and expected to be so.