

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

L.A. Sculptor Evan Holloway Tackles a Fresh Medium in a New Studio

Known for using low-tech construction methods and craft-store materials, the artist tackles a fresh challenge: Large-scale outdoor works made of metal

by Tiffany Jow | January 16, 2019



Evan Holloway in his North Hollywood studio.

After making sculpture for more than 20 years, Evan Holloway wants to develop work for spaces beyond the conventional white box. To the 51-year-old Los Angeles-based artist—who specializes in using low-tech construction methods to manipulate craft-store supplies like Sculptamold, Aqua-Resin, and CelluClay into unpolished, yet skillfully handmade, creations—the prospect of making large-scale work from long-lasting, weather-resistant matter presents a new challenge for his ongoing material exploration. Nature, he's concluded, is a more interesting environment to present his work in anyway. "I am so very tired of white walls and the sonic qualities of art galleries," he says. "They are oppressive to me."

This marks a shift in Holloway's practice, which is defined by sculptures with seemingly jerry-built veneers that hold serious ideas: The work is funny yet brainy, much like that of his former teacher, the sculptor Charles Ray. His approach has earned him a cult-like status (Raf Simons is a patron and friend) and a place in exhibitions at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Hammer Museum, and in the 2002 Whitney Biennial.

On January 12, five pieces to emerge from this new vein went on view at L.A.'s David Kordansky Gallery in "Outdoor Sculpture," Holloway's first show to exclusively feature objects



Plaster forms in the studio.



An upright piano and speaker in a corner of the space.

conceived for outdoor installation. In typical Holloway style, the pieces riff on ones he's done before—such as a person-size Möbius strip that doubles as an incense holder, or stacks of colorful clownish heads—but made from metal. This alters a sculpture's appearance and its message, a consequential part of any Holloway work. One piece, a bulging volume studded with dead batteries cast in bronze, recalls Holloway's "Landscape" (2015), where real spent batteries formed the tines of painted plaster plants. "In previous sculptures, the batteries have a relationship to time in the sense that they're actively in the process of decay," Holloway says. "When I translate them to metal, the factor of time is different: The batteries are memorialized for some other meaning." He often strains to talk about his latest work, as if

he's still wrapping his head around how it's evolved from what came before. "These pieces are about time and monumentality," he offers. "I'm not making a bid for personal history, but they are engaging in a bigger conversation."

Holloway works out of a 1950s industrial park in North Hollywood. It's comprised of nine large units that he's interconnected, each with a purpose: There's one space for shop tools, one designated for wax work, one that's variable. He moved in six months ago, namely for the space to experiment with his current, outdoor-centric projects. Four staffers provide extra hands to help with the pieces' hand-finished surfaces ("It's humanly impossible for me to cover that amount of surface area," Holloway says) and extra-large objects are finished at a foundry offsite. "It's a dream studio in that I'd always imagined compartmentalized spaces—it works better for me than a big open room," Holloway says. He also keeps a private studio, where he's "free to make work that is terrible, embarrassing, or anything other than anyone would expect." Once, he erected



A resin mixture dries in a pot in the studio.



Holloway with one of his more recent, large-scale forms.

an installation in a six-by-ten-foot storage unit that had a single visitor: Himself.

The whole thing is an interesting setup for someone whose personal history is all about overcoming inhibition, and whose work is made by intuition. Holloway was born in Whittier, California, into a working-class family of evangelical fundamentalists who weren't particularly keen on the arts. When he was old enough to explore downtown L.A. on his own, he started making trips to the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and found post-minimalist sculptures by Bruce Nauman, Louise Bourgeois, and Eva Hesse particularly appealing. He learned more at libraries and used book stores, where he discovered back-issues of *Artforum*. At 18, he decided to become an artist—even though he never really made art before.

Holloway graduated from U.C.L.A.'s MFA program and entered the L.A. art scene in the late 1990s, becoming a defining part of a new generation of California-based artists heavily influenced by area practitioners—Mike Kelley, John Baldessari, and Jim Shaw among them—who also taught at local universities. I can see SoCal subject matter in his work—how that knotted metal incense burner is a clever nod to California's New Age tendencies and sprawling high-rises, or how the candy-colored head tower pokes fun at the notion of hierarchy—but to



A sampling of color swatches.



Holloway's *Siblings*, one of the new works at David Kordansky.

Holloway, it's less a product of L.A. and more about his point of view. "I just see the work as so unlikely," he says. "I have a weird perspective on things, and California was a very good place to develop that." In turn, his strange sculptures invite reflection on ourselves, our habits, and the problems therein.

To make a new piece, Holloway works things out in real space, against his own body. "I work under the assumption that a portion of the audience will share the experience I'm having—whether I feel a certain mass of an object resonating with my own mass, or an empty space being activated," he says. Holloway never draws, and relies on instinct to create forms that tap into a universal language, prompting shared physical impressions and ideas.

Aside from settling into his new studio and preparing for a February group show at Jeffrey Deitch's L.A. gallery, Holloway plans to focus on developing new tricks for his outdoor interventions. The learning curve—which consists of ample technical trial-and-error and inventing production methods that won't break the bank—hasn't been easy or quick. His mission, though, hasn't changed. "Fundamentally, what I'm doing is crafting these really particular experiences that happen when you get up close to an object and walk around it," he says. "But I'm very excited about this show. Hopefully, it's a stepping stone to some greater faculty."



Third Verse, a patinated bronze piece in the Kordansky show. Photo: Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles