



Will, Rachel. "Katy Cowan Poses Essential Questions Through Material Decisions," *Artsy Editorial*, Nov. 21, 2015.



Katy Cowan
"Prints and Color and Rope Variation," 2017
Oil and enamel spray paint on cast bronze, ceramic, braided rope
94 x 24 x 6 in
238.76 x 60.96 x 15.24

For Katy Cowan, the idea of the studio, and where it begins and ends, is a complex matter. Is it in the community ceramics center while using the kiln? In her car when she's transporting work? Or when she's explaining the unusual activities in her backyard to her neighbors? Instead of defining the space, she lets the question nag at her, buoying her practice.

In her second solo show with Philip Martin Gallery, titled "The Studio, The Sketch," Cowan allows her diverse artistic practice to carry essential questions through the mediums of sun-sensitive paints, wood sculpture, ceramics, textiles, and watercolors. Instead of overwhelming the audience, Cowan's material decisions interact, showing her deeply conceived process. "I wanted this exhibition specifically to be that you're meandering around these different material decisions," Cowan told Artsy, "but all the kind of ways of making the different pieces ricochet off each other or bounce through the different materials, or you see those decisions reflected in a painting or a sculpture or a wall work."

The diversity of materials and methods in Cowan's current practice are an intentional departure from her early education as an oil painter. She previously found herself frustrated within the medium, unable to convey her artistic decisions. When she began a period of cutting up her paintings and reconfiguring them, she knew it was a time for change. She later enrolled at the Otis College of Art and Design to get her MFA in 2012, where the exploratory environment allowed her to dabble in new materials, which led to the emergence of her current, multifaceted work.

Today Cowan's work incorporates a variety of materials that bridge the worlds of craft and fine art. Her series of plywood sculptures incorporate washes of watercolor and floral imprints, abstracting the form of the sculpture. The sun-sensitive paintings raise questions of process and a DIY quality. The playful piece titled *Sock and Line Variation* (2015) is an elaborate amalgamation of materials, including handmade brick anchoring the hand-braided, hand-dyed muslin rope with slip-cast socks dangling from its line.

Ultimately, her subject matter floats between essential tensions raised by her works: be it the location of the studio, craft versus fine art, quick versus slow modes of making, abstraction versus representation. Instead of being limited by dualisms, Cowan's work transports viewers to a multipolar world.

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