

# Los Angeles Times

Mizota, Sharon. "Katy Cowan: Art about Art, with a Playful Side," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 13, 2015.



Katy Cowan  
"All-ism," 2015  
Watercolor, gouache, pastels, latex paint, spray paint, sun-sensitive paint and clearcoat on wood  
72 x 18 x 20 in  
182.88 x 45.72 x 50.8 cm

A lot of artists make art about art. Someone is always examining the conditions of the studio, the exhibition, art-making itself. All this navel-gazing can be yawn-inducing, but in Katy Cowan's hands, it's fun. Her exhibition at Cherry and Martin irreverently mixes high art tropes with construction materials, photographic techniques and a craft sensibility.

The sculptures -- chunky vertical sandwiches of rough plywood cutouts -- are the strongest pieces. "Double Still Life" consists of two such constructions: identical, stepped silhouettes of a bottle surrounded by fruit. One is roughly colored in semi-realistic brights; the other is all gray. It could be an underpainting, or perhaps a shadow. Together, they cheekily pop a still life painting into three dimensions, but they also dissect, with crude glee, the layering that undergirds the illusion.

Wall works similarly refer to gestural abstraction but involve photographic processes and sewing instead of the artist's hand. Cowan coats fabric with sun-sensitive paint and places objects like two-by-fours on top, leaving them out in the sun. The results are wobbly verticals Xs haloed in sunset colors. Some also incorporate sewn panels and use turmeric as a soft yellow dye. This approach tethers abstract imagery back to the real world: humble materials, homespun crafting and the sun. The studio, Cowan suggests, rather than a crucible of angsty brilliance, might be instead a space for experimentation and play.

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