
Interview

Matt Hoyt Puts It All on the Shelf

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ABOVE: MATT HOYT, UNTITLED (GROUP 18), 2006-2011

In Matt Hoyt's spare, elegant show opening Jan. 8 at New York's Bureau gallery, simple but elusive sculptures are displayed in small groups on understated shelves. The elements are so plain, in fact, that at first glance they appear to be found objects, albeit in curious arrangements. Some look like rocks, others like shards of pottery or pieces of bone, one like a rusty length of chain wrapped around a bolt or twig. Their unassuming mien belies an astounding depth.

Hoyt works for years on each of these tiny sculptures. Some are even made, exhibited, reworked, and re-exhibited in a different context. A patina of making—which occurs, he says, at a pace that's more like geology than contemporary art—gives the sculptures a complex aura of intensity and singular focus. Like the pictures of “thoughtographer” Ted Serios, who claimed to be able to make photographs with his mind, Hoyt's sculptures are imprinted with his attention. Deeply personal and of a scale that flies in the face of most artwork these days, they seem like the remnant fetishes of a lost culture—objects that were valued for reasons that have been lost to history.

The sculptures have hefty formal aspects, and are exceedingly well crafted. Melted tape, resins, plastics, and putties are put to surprising and satisfying ends. Each has a haunting, almost-there verisimilitude that puts one into a tense space between suspicion and receivership. The atmosphere of the show is similarly hard to pin down: it is not quite like a natural history museum, nor is it totally a store of childhood treasures, nor yet is it completely an exhibition of sculpture.