

Amuse

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Meet the Hottest New Sculptors in LA

The artists using everything from Diet Coke to Washing Machines

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Look on any street corner, or motorway-underpass in Los Angeles and you'll see one thing: trash. Jason Rhoades' recent (and very popular) show at Hauser and Wirth DTLA showed how this can translate into an incredible body of work. So it's no surprise that the newest wave of LA sculptors and artists are also creating from what is local and nearby to them – the excess objects discarded by a fast-paced post-modern consumer city.

Here are three LA sculptors to know:

Joel Kyack



For his recent show 'On the Floor in the Cave of Skulls' at Francois Ghebaly Gallery, Joel Kyack presented a found-object take on Duchamp's *Fountain*.

Kyack's seductively subversive versions are made of water bottles, buckets, cinderblocks, cups and tubes and other ephemera, cycled and recycled flows of water (and disturbing dark dye) are pumped through using gravity and hidden tubing.



"There were three main sculptures. I worked on those for 4-5 months, 'bringing them up' at the same time, because I wanted the three to feel really different from one another, but somehow together," Kyack says.

He's a hoarder, albeit a cyclical one. "For me, when I'm making objects, it's really important to have a lot of objects around, other objects to take from," says Kyack. "I often think of the thrift store as a prop house that I rent from. I get stuff, from there that I bring into the studio and it gets made into something."



The flowing, cyclical aspects of his seemingly whimsical work also has greater symbolism to the artist: "I think of the hydrological cycle, of the way water moves in the world, and I have always just been fascinated with that, since I was a kid, with science. How that system makes the Earth live, in a way that becomes a very whole thing, it becomes a whole organism that depends on the system of evaporation and water movement."

Stephen Neidich



Many of today's artists don't touch their works at all, but Stephen Neidich, originally from New York, is not one of them. Making each (often motorised) sculpture from the ground-up in his tool-filled DTLA studio takes the artist, 32, a couple months. This kind of work is as much about the collation of materials as it the construction.

"In Downtown LA you have a lot of areas where there is a growth of these materials, but I stay away from those, as those are part of somebody's house," he says. "So these [sculptures] are a mixture of thrift-stores, stuff that I found in the street, and then I did a big haul from a guy's storage facility in Baldwin, that was originally for my space in Rob Pruitt's Flea Market."



Being so hands-on can be hazardous though: "Every time you fix one problem you create another one, so it just becomes this ongoing problem-solving issue. There's a dent on the wall there, from the washing machine." And indeed, a recent work features said washing machine, along with a shopping cart, an ironing board and road-signs all bound together into a tower and rotating in unison; on the wall is a light-up blindfolded Santa figure along with other objects wrapped in pale green cling-film like those safe-suitcases at the airport.

"I don't want to change the object that much, that is why they are barely painted, or overly modified," says Neidich, whose next solo show at [Central Park Gallery LA](#) is provocatively titled *10lbs of shit in a 5lb bag*.

Mark Hagen



Mark Hagen takes a subtle approach to the integration of the everyday materials. In his mixed-media work, Hagen repurposes and remoulds everything from egg-cartons and other mass-produced packaging, to "car rims, scrap aluminium, and my own space-frame parts I've melted down and poured into drawings I've made in foundry sand."

Hagen, 45, hails from Falls Church, Virginia, a much more verdant environment than the concrete jungle surrounding his Frogtown studio.



His most close-to-home found material was discovered 5 years ago – ‘stolen’ from under the noses of one of the toughest police-forces in L.A. “Surreptitiously, I made a mold of the ceramic tile facade of the abandoned Rampart police station on Temple near Echo Park. Over the years I’ve been incorporating casts of these tiles into various works.” These including those built back into a wall at Hollywood’s LAXART and also at his international gallery, Almine Rech.



And then there's his unique take on Diet Coke, which is a key component in the rainbow chemical reaction that characterizes his towers and wall pieces. After some internet recipe sleuthing, Hagen discovered that "if one 'cooks' the Diet Coke on the surface of the titanium, it evaporates leaving behind transparent and microscopically thin layers of phosphoric acid crystals." Which creates a permanent 'prism' effect. And now he's perfected the process: "I've sometimes used Coke Zero too and am thinking about trying Crystal Pepsi now that they're remaking it. I like the perversity of contaminating my work with these substances and conversely turning what are actually really disgusting liquids into rainbows."