

**Museum of Contemporary Art
Los Angeles**

Selections from the Permanent Collection

On View 2017

Harry Dodge's

The Virtual Is Not Immaterial (Plastic Sunset/Solar Anus)

2017

Urethane resin, Wood, Sock, Graphite, Paint, Concrete, Plexiglass

Galvanized steel hardware

To me, *The Virtual is not Immaterial (Plastic Sunset/External Anus)* exists as a sort of collision of the Merleau-Pontian idea of *flesh* (not quite idea, not quite matter) and a kind of visceral poetics of the internet-augmented, socio-sexual, virtual artifact. I intend that this read extend to various structural analogies. In other words, I want to nuance the over-simplified dyad of real and virtual. Can I find body (affective emanations) from, in, by the machine/the screen/flatness? The monitor is manifest sculpturally in all of the flat boards, large, small, but even more specifically, by way of the clear plastic (man-handled, lubed-up) “window” which, when examined, is also a peculiar version of an otherwise familiar image: sunset and horizon. (What are the physical pleasures of watching a sunset remotely?) This hot magenta blob could also be any kind of heated *button* that is ecstatic, seductive, filthy and pleasurable. The sock shape, to me, represents an opportunity to invite and then frustrate a viewer’s initial response to it. Designated (titularly) as an external anus, it is thus presented as an organ with both interior and exterior functions, simultaneously. The emphasis here is on defamiliarization in which the strange becomes familiar so that the familiar may become strange. Viewers are invited to consider how a hole/a place/a pleasure might be convex and concave at once, in a sort of Klein bottle or Mobius fashion. As an artist, I have consistently imaged assholes as a universalized physicalized/sexual site. Or, “*Everybody has one, hallelujah.*”

This is a transitional piece I made after finishing all of the work for 2015’s *The Cybernetic Fold*, (a show in which I took up the challenge of reversing my decades of technophobia). With this body of work, I experimented with rustling up corporeality in flatness, upending the (false binary) sense that bodies leave off somewhere distinct, and objects there begin.

—Harry Dodge, 2017

From a letter to Lanka Tattersall, Associate Curator, MOCA

The works in this gallery all refer to the human body. The artists harness ambiguous forms to address the anxieties surrounding gender, bodily functions, desire, and sex, ultimately calling attention to the absurd nature of living in our bodies. For instance, Harry Dodge, Mike Kelley, and Yayoi Kusama create sculptures that embody female and male characteristics simultaneously. Others, like Richard Artschwager and Tom Friedman, humorously confront the idiosyncrasies of the body, whereas Tom Burr and Mary Kelly consider the body as a politically contested site. Unlike many of the classical or idealized bodies we associate with the history of art, these objects suggest fluidity instead of the static, the organic in response to the artificial, the tactile in light of the rigid, and the human-oriented in scale rather than the monumental.













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Small text label on the wall to the right of the collage.



Textual information or a label, possibly describing the artwork or the exhibition.













