

HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

Willie Cole's High Heel Fantasias

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Finding beauty in the commonplace — some may even say banal — is one of artist Willie Cole's strengths. His ability to rejigger the consumer world around us into something more fantastic creates the illusion that his art springs from the mystical intersection of folk culture, utility, design, contemporary art, and mythology.

His new show at Alexander and Bonin gallery in Chelsea, "*If wishes were horses ...*," is filled with a tinkerer's workshop of wondrous objects but his five African-inspired sculptures created from women's shoes are the most visually seductive. The four wall sculptures and one large-scale freestanding work, "The Sole Sitter" (2013), transform our perception of the high heel show with a type of Sub-Saharan alchemy that extends our physical expectation of the material into something wholly new.



An installation view of Willie Cole's new show at Alexander and Bonin

In an interview published earlier this year on Hyperallergic, Cole explained why he uses consumer objects to make art and focused on capitalist culture. "Culture is driven by the ego of the shopper," he explained. "So much of what life could or should be about is masked by our obsession with buying and owning and wanting something we can't afford."

I don't think Cole makes his creations into something more accessible, but he does sprinkle his pixie dust on humdrum objects to return a sense of simple magic that we'd been overlooking all along.

Willie Cole's "If wishes were horses..." continues at Alexander and Bonin until November 16.