

# ARTFORUM

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## Andy Coolquitt

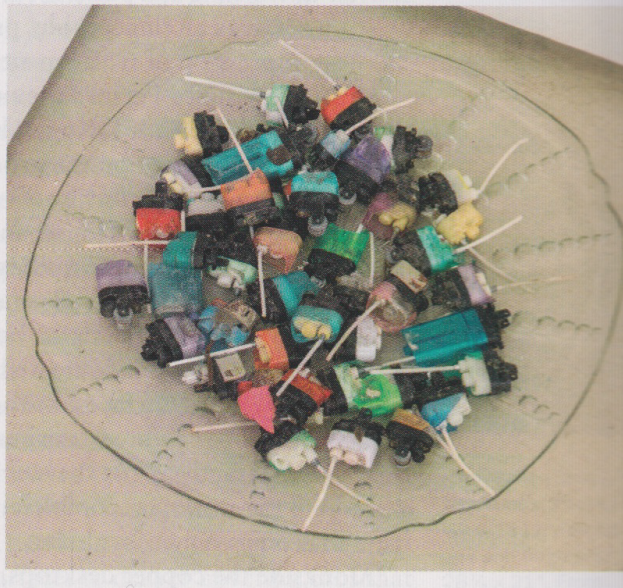
LISA COOLEY

An extended investigation into the character and qualities of things-in-the-world, Andy Coolquitt's practice situates objects in compelling, provocative reciprocity with the viewer. Coolquitt is at base a committed devotee of *stuff*—what its most acute modern theorizer, Martin Heidegger, referred to as *Zeug*, a slippery word that sometimes ends up being rendered as "equipment"—and the Austin-based artist's unusual

skills as a bricoleur stem from his willingness to follow various materials where they lead, even as he continually imagines some other form of presence into which they might be encouraged to emerge. The artist's assemblages of paraphernalia are often bare—cobbled from tubing, lightbulbs, plastic boxes, and scraps of wood; items of clothing, strips of fabric, hunks of shag-carpet toilet-seat cover—yet his generous, conjectural mode of presentation reveals them to us not as dull, abject throwaways, but as those sorts of "entities" that, per the philosopher, "we encounter in concern."

Just how Coolquitt manages to engineer this atmosphere of attention, of concern, around his repurposings of fundamentally banal objects is not easy to tease out at first encounter. There is, of course, much in the air these days in artistic and philosophical discourse around the question of *things*—speculative ontologies that pick up on and extend Heidegger's reconsiderations of the essential conditions of the material world and our relationships with it—as well as something of a moment around representational candor that one sees in the work of authors such as Karl Ove Knausgaard, for whom virtually nothing in the world would seem to fall below the threshold for interested consideration. Coolquitt's work—which presents like an even more plainspoken descendant of the constructions of Richard Tuttle or B. Wurtz—finds common cause with both of these current intellectual strains: A room full of poor things becomes, under the influence of his operations, a matrix for producing unexpected sympathies. The combinatory procedures he performs on his carefully chosen assortments of objects are not intended to valorize or aggrandize them; instead, they are designed to come to grips with the conditions of the items' meagerness and in that insufficiency paradoxically find the basis for rich experience.

"Somebody place," Coolquitt's recent show and his fourth at Lisa Cooley, felt airy and open-armed despite containing nearly thirty works. It hardly seemed to matter whether a given construction was set on the floor or hung from the walls or ceiling—each offered up, in its own way, an argument for a kind of existential credibility (necessity?), even when its outlandishly anti-functional hybridity tested the conventional boundaries





of material coherence. Descriptions of Coolquitt's works are destined to sound almost impossibly pedestrian, somehow wrong—a dish of decapitated cigarette-lighter heads, for example, in *kandy*; a fuzzy pink blanket sandwiched inside a Plexiglas cube in *i've gotta take this*; a pair of mismatched handles set on a whited-out plastic box frame in *icebox* (all 2014)—but his designs are on precisely such prosaic, inarticulate irruptions in the world of matter, his technique conceived to highlight something essential in his raw materials even as he re-presents them within his comprehensively warping regime of recontextualization.

The artist does have a fondness for ornate, occasionally overripe titles—a shelf full of gorgeously abraded roll-on-deodorant container forms from 2013 is dubbed *Neo-Deo: Open Market, Open Vitrine, & Deo-Liberal Potentialities*, while a pairing from the same year of a hanging tangle of steel tubing and a small Rymanesque “painting” made from white fluff is styled as *white/worm/bad/perm/lean/squeezel/wipe/learn/lip/germ/light*—and if these suggest a linguistic parallel to the playfulness that suffuses the sculptural project as a whole, they also betray some measure of insecurity about the ability of the unassuming

Andy Coolquitt,  
*kandy*, 2014, lighter  
parts, glass dish,  
11½ × 11½”.

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constituents of his scenarios to fully engage the viewer without the assistance of some amount of souped-up metaphorical or narrative language. It's somehow all the more affecting, then, when he forces meaning from his arrays without any such additional reinforcement, as in works such as *company*, 2014, a collection of largely unremarkable items leaned against, hung from, set before, and stuck to the gallery wall. It's a work representative of Coolquitt's program at its best, acting as it does as an inventory of “equipment” that is broken but also remade in such a way that it does not withdraw from us, but rather steps forward from itself and into the world.

—Jeffrey Kastner