

Evan Holloway

Scry if you want to

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Press Release

Evan Holloway's new exhibition *Scry if you want to* presents three approaches to visionary practice and, even with the pun in the title, invites non-ironic engagement with the artworks as potential portals to the extraordinary. A musical/video addendum features several songs written by Holloway that explain the theory and ideas behind the works. These are so diverse in terms of style and technique that one could easily mistake them, at first glance, as being by three different artists. Yet the varied forms share a conceptual intent. Each investigates the art object as a latent vehicle for transcendent experience.

Holloway's colourful wall-mounted bas-relief sculptures, called *Enochian Tablets*, initially seem to relate to the tradition of system-based abstraction, as exemplified by the paintings of Piet Mondrian or Alfred Jensen. This is because the appearance of each tablet is governed by a set of pre-determined principles. Yet Holloway does not follow rules of his own invention. He subscribes, instead, to a set of instructions that originated in late sixteenth-century England. They were received (today we might say 'channelled') by Elizabeth I's astrologer, the notable mathematician, astronomer and spy John Dee (1527-1608/9), and his associate, the alchemist and scryer Edward Kelley (1555-1597). Through their many communications with spirits, seen in a crystal ball or on a flat obsidian 'shew-stone', they were instructed to make a grid of 12 × 13 squares and told to place letters (later replaced by a unique alphabet) within these spaces in a particular order. This formed an interlocking array of spirit names.

The *Automatic Drawings*, on the other hand, represent an attempt to bypass the artist's consciousness, which links them to modernist works such as the *cadavre exquis* experiments of the Surrealists or even Jackson Pollock's so-called 'drip-paintings'. Holloway works and reworks his drawings over countless hours, using various methods to deter and prevent him from looking at the paper. This also limits his conscious control over the final outcome. As part of the process, large sheets of paper are folded and placed on a turntable. This mechanical device not only ensures a randomness in the mark-making but also allows the artist to work across a larger surface area. The folding and vigorous pen-work results in visceral rips in the paper which are repaired, and the drawings are worked again. This intensive process creates swirling compositions of densely-layered fine lines. Upon closer inspection, tiny, mesmerizing fields and complicated intersections can be discovered amidst the array of intricate marks. For the artist, these open a new arena for scrying and intuitive gazing.

Holloway is primarily known as a sculptor. In this exhibition, he presents a series of what he calls 'direct metal sculptures'. These are improvised, welded works that highlight his continuing interest in formalist sculpture as a site for real-life engagement with objects-in-space. As Holloway states in one of the exhibition's explanatory songs: "You can feel with your body, you can sense with your mass". As with nearly all his sculptural work, Holloway insists that the visceral experience of sculpture in relation to the viewer's body is the most fundamental aspect of the medium. The artist works intuitively with space while making these sculptures but is also being led (and limited) by the potential of the objects he has found. Historically, the direct metal assemblages can be seen in the context of 'junk sculpture', a term coined by Lawrence Alloway in 1961 to

describe work made exclusively from obsolete materials. The art critic traced its evolution back to Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, and even the Bauhaus.

Evan Holloway is particularly interested in how, despite the huge technological advances of our age, certain fundamental aspects of life continue unabated. Car parts and wheelbarrow frames, as seen in the exhibition, are manufactured in much the same way today as they were a century ago, for example. The experience Holloway seeks to create is an intensely analogue one that revolves around our perception of the physical-material world and the new, often poetic relationships that arise between the disparate parts. While the work pays homage to previous iterations of 'junk sculpture', they remain resolutely contemporary. As with the other works in the show, these sculptures play with time, history, and the potential for an individual viewer to engage in sensory exploration.

Evan Holloway (b. 1967, Whittier, CA) lives and works in Los Angeles. His works feature in many public collections, including the Whitney Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; LACMA, Los Angeles; MCA, Chicago; MOCA, Los Angeles and the Smithsonian Hirshhorn Museum, Washington DC.

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