

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICK

Los Angeles

Erin Trefry

LOWELL RYAN PROJECTS

4851 West Adams. Blvd.

September 7–October 12, 2019



Erin Trefry, *spirits muse and envelop the torso with winged victory*, 2017–19, stoneware, purse handles, fabric, drawer pulls, zip ties, 25 x 24 x 9".

Erin Trefry kept her brushes heavily loaded to make the four large paintings on view in “If the Moon Turns Green,” her first solo presentation and the sixth exhibition at the new Lowell Ryan Projects in Los Angeles. Each canvas is dominated by a tangled armature delineated by thick ribbons of paint. In three of the paintings, the central form appears to be partly a complex architectural idea and partly some fantastical beast determined to lay waste to the nearest town. Shoelaces detail the edges of some shapes while ceramic shards are embedded

in the thick impasto, lending a sedimentary quality to these gothic pictures. On the floor nearby are four small ceramic towers whose haphazard construction seems to defy physics; they could be props from a Tim Burton film.

Nine assemblages, hung on the wall, are mounted on stretched pleather, linen, denim, and other fabrics. These Frankensteinian monsters are made of deconstructed and abstracted found materials—sweatshirts, purse handles, shoes, furniture components—largely scavenged from the possessions of Trefry’s family members, both living and dead. Often bristling with zip ties or sharp ceramic elements and involving plenty of leather, they are dark in palette and suggestive of s/m gear, dangerous insects, faces, masks, and orchids flattened between the pages of a book. Their tenebrous colors and protruding exoskeletons echo the paintings’ moodiness and spatial linework. Trefry’s concatenations are fetish objects in both sexual and sacral senses. And following the African sculptural tradition of materializing the spiritual (to which Trefry’s sculptures are surely indebted), the works resemble talismans, conferring the protective power of dead ancestors through the life force captured in their belongings.

— Daniel Gerwin