

# HYPERALLERGIC

GALLERIES

## Sculptures of Synthetic Body Parts Mixed and Matched

by Jeffrey Grunthaner on March 30, 2016



*Ross Knight, "Precision Bearing (...) Brace" (2015), urethane, chrome steel, knee brace, plaster, glaze, 11.5 x 6 x 9 in (all images courtesy of the artist and Team Gallery)*

Taking in the bricolage-like sculptures that make up [Ross Knight's](#) current [Team Gallery](#) exhibition, [Human Stuff](#), I found myself wondering: can sculptural works that physically render immaterial digital structures give us an authentic perspective on the body, one that takes into account its history as well as its potential? Knight's work signals "no."

Placed on pedestals or obtrusively on the floor, Knight's sculptures are appendages composed of silicone, urethane, and other materials that allude to prosthetics. "Support,"

# HYPERALLERGIC



*Installation view of 'Ross Knight: Human Stuff' at Team Gallery*

“peg,” and “knee brace” all either figure into the title of a piece or constitute an integral component of one. Knight combines his materials like units of a language. Starting from an image of the human body, he dissects it into metonyms — a foot, an arm, a mouth. Each element, taken in isolation, refers to a shattered organism, and the sculptures are put together as though an algorithm had procedurally assembled the parts of a body from operating room bric-a-brac.

I like to think Knight is purposefully alluding to digitally inspired sculpture in this exhibition. Dismantling the packaged, readily Instagrammable look of “post-internet” art, these works have a complicated relationship with immaterial structures manifested in solid form and IRL space. Knight’s sculptures are more tactile than visual; they don’t photograph well; they’re simultaneously porous and invulnerable, gross and alluring. Their surrealistic juxtaposition of parts, which evoke [Comte de Lautréamont](#)’s “chance encounter of an umbrella and a sewing-machine on a dissection-table,” declares a corresponding dislocation in what

# HYPERALLERGIC

they're modeled on: the body reduced to a simulacrum.



*Ross Knight, "Connected Down the Middle (Cavity)" (2016), urethane, acrylic, silicone, 28 x 20 x 8 in (click to enlarge)*

Knight combines a Minimalist tendency, using materials in a way that signifies nothing more or less than what they are, with references to the provenance of objects. His handling of silicone, for example, echoes its use in pacemaker tubing, deodorants, electronics, and so on. This makes his sculptures appear both recognizable and distant. In his more open-ended works, ambiguity is rendered physically in their shape. "Connected Down the Middle (Cavity)" (2016) could be a tool, a diorama of a

tooth, or a 3D-printed human spinal column. The ambiguity here derives from how the bone-like plasticity of urethane takes on the character of a referent, invoking the product-like friendliness of corporate imagery.

Though they take the body as their starting point, Knight's sculptures poke fun at the idea of organic unity. Any intimation of aesthetic wholeness is overwhelmed by the particularity of the materials and objects he puts to use. Alluding to the flattened-out and branded imagery of social media and online superstores, his sculptures appear both chaotic and inert. Knight represents "human stuff" as slick, shiny, and stylized, which only makes the cleavage between his urethane constructions and the organic originals inspiring them more apparent.

Knight uses manufactured objects in a way that rarely conceals their utility, but highlights their most salient characteristics. When he deploys a rubber floor mat, in "(Greaseproof) Floor Mat-Hide" (2015), he folds it and lets its manipulated bulk sit on the floor. When he uses a knee brace, in "Precision Bearing (...) Brace" (2015), it rests on a pedestal like the image of an item up for sale on eBay. Knight's sculptures depend on delicate arrangement. The figures he assembles possess a structural frailty similar to what [Alberto Giacometti](#) achieved using iron. But Knight's constructions don't feature anything as enduring as iron;

# HYPERALLERGIC



Ross Knight, "Greaseproof Floor Mat-Hide" (2015), bleached rawhide, rubber floormat, 24 x 56 x 27 in



Ross Knight, "BeadChain (Skin Replacement) Stand" (2015), urethane, silicone, metal, rawhide, 23 x 12 x 6 in

the mostly tabletop works on view here are fetishistic, like a menagerie of amputated limbs.

*Human Stuff* may very well indicate a deadlock regarding how the body is represented in the age of digital media. This can extend to the practices of other artists working today; [Débora Delmar Corp](#) and [Alisa Barenboym](#) (to name only two) are using found objects and “industrial materials” in a way similar to Knight. Yet Knight distinguishes himself by the way he delineates figures. The image being an effete substitute for genuine spatial extension, the absurdity of trying to replicate the human body in images is implied in Knight’s playfully pessimistic exhibition. Ultimately, there’s an uproarious poetry to the way he represents flesh-toned, humanoid limbs in silicone.

[Ross Knight: Human Stuff](#) continues at [Team Gallery](#) (83 Grand Street, Soho, Manhattan) through April 3.