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Review Joel Kyack's kinetic sculptures: The cycles of life in water bottles, buckets and a record player

Sharon Mizota | April 29, 2016



Joel Kyack's exhibition is at Francois Ghebaly Gallery through May 14. (Jeff McLane / Joel Kyack and Francois Ghebaly Gallery)

You might want to use the restroom before visiting Joel Kyack's exhibition at François Ghebaly Gallery.

The artist, known for his endurance performances and examinations of bodily processes, has turned his attention to the fountain as an aesthetic and mechanical form. The sound of running water permeates the show, uniting dark, intertwining notions of physicality, modernity and consumerism.

"The Body Is a Glass House" is a baker's rack threaded with a zigzagging network of plastic bottles through which water flows in a continuous loop. Here, the body is an absurd machine — really just a network of tubes — as seen via the modernist aesthetic of transparency and supported by our wasteful obsession with bottled water.

"Anatomy of an Empire" makes an even more pointed critique. The white Melamine structure evokes the clean lines of a modernist house. But it is stained by a black liquid that flows continually from a "head" composed of a blue pinstriped shirtsleeve — standard stockbroker issue — and sunglasses. The rest of the fountain is dotted with objects suggestive of body parts: a lumpy pink spine, a pale chunk of hairy leg, muddy egg-shaped masses. Despite its aspirations to total mastery, empire is a spewing, fleshy, dismembered mess.

Yet the show isn't entirely pessimistic. In the second room is a beautiful kinetic sculpture: a spiral of wire wrapped around a balloon. The wire is affixed at the bottom to a spinning record player, and as it turns, the balloon appears to fall and be cradled in the spiral. Titled "Father Time," it includes a thrift store photo of a sleeping baby and is a lovely evocation of the cycle of life, defying the many dehumanizing factors that conspire against it.

Francois Ghebaly Gallery, 2245 W. Washington Blvd., Los Angeles, (323) 282-5187, through May 14.
Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.ghebaly.com

