

Hany Armanious

Michael Lett
312 Karangahape Road
Cnr K Rd & East St
PO Box 68287 Victoria St West
Auckland 1145
New Zealand
P+ 64 9 309 7848
contact@michaellett.com
www.michaellett.com



Hany Armanious
Sleeping Saint
2022
cast polyurethane resin
140 x 570 x 300 mm



Hany Armanious
Tabula Rasa (detail)
2022

cast resin, aluminium, suede, marble and brass
1740 x 330 x 480 mm



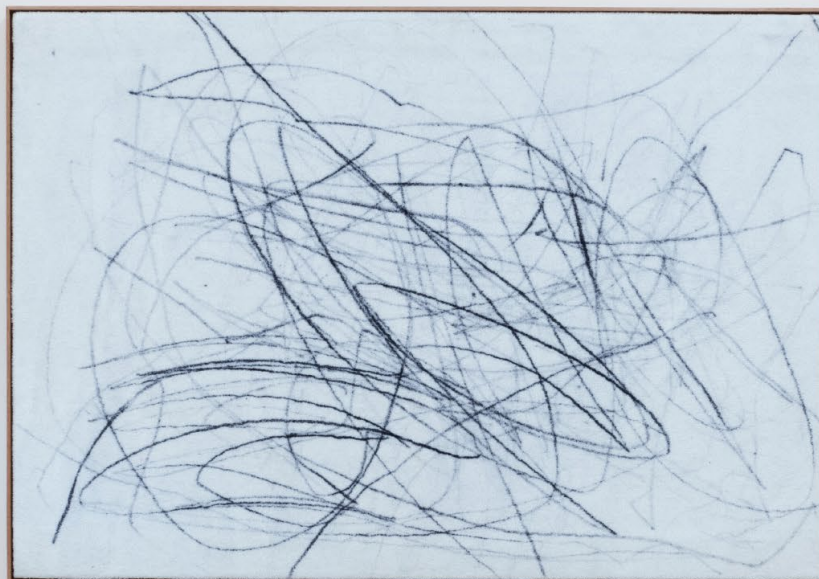
Hany Armanious
Tabula Rasa
2022

cast resin, aluminium, suede, marble and brass
1740 x 330 x 480 mm



Hany Armanious
Tabula Rasa (detail)
2022

cast resin, aluminium, suede, marble and brass
1740 x 330 x 480 mm







Hany Armanious
The Shadow
2016

giclée print, ultra chrome ink on cotton rag paper
1110 x 1530 mm



Hany Armanious
Still Life
2013

pigmented polyurethane resin, white bronze
450 x 560 x 30 mm



Hany Armanious
Untitled
2015
UV reactive dye on cut pile nylon carpet
1000 x 1600 mm



Hany Armanious
Ejaculate and Dick
2013
pigmented polyurethane resin
1300 x 400 x 500mm
HA3113-1



Hany Armanious
Set down
Installation view, Michael Lett, 2013



Hany Armanious
Ejaculate and Dick (detail)
2013
pigmented polyurethane resin
1300 x 400 x 500mm
HA3113-1



Hany Armanious
The Golden Thread
Installation view
The Australian Pavilion at the 54th International Art Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia
June 2011



Hany Armanious
Relative Nobody
2010
cast pigmented polyurethane resin, bronze
1140 x 890 x 660 mm



Hany Armanious
The Golden Thread
Installation view
The Australian Pavilion at the 54th International Art Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia
June 2011

Hany Armanious

Born 1962, Egypt
Lives and works in Sydney, Australia

Much of Armanious' practice of recent years can be traced to his fascination with the processes and problems of making sculpture – casting in particular. His latest bodies of work play out these processes in a fantastical cycle of self-referentiality forged from an acute awareness of the analogous morphologies of form, material, and cultural resource.

Hany Armanious was born in Egypt and grew up in Australia, where he currently lives. He has exhibited widely throughout Australasia, Europe and United States over the past two decades. In 2011 Armanious represented Australia in the 54th Venice Biennale with his exhibition *The Golden Thread* in the Australian Pavilion. In 2001 his work was shown as part of a solo exhibition at the UCLA Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and later at the Ian Potter Museum in Melbourne. Armanious was awarded the prestigious Moet and Chandon Australian Art Foundation Fellowship in 1998. His work is held in most major Australian public and private collections as well as many overseas.

EDUCATION

2021
DCA (Doctor of Creative Arts) at University of Wollongong, Australia

1984
Bachelor of Visual Arts, City Art Institute, Sydney, Australia

AWARDS & RESIDENCIES

2005
Shortlisted for National Sculpture Prize, National Gallery of Australia

2004
Artist in Residence, Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland, Auckland New Zealand

1998
Moet et Chandon Fellow

1997
Finalist, Contempora5

1993
Australia Council, Los Angeles Studio

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2022
Tabula Rasa, Michael Lett, Auckland (solo)
Walls to Live Beside, Rooms to Own: The Chartwell Show, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (group)

2021
Hany Armanious, Fine Arts, Sydney (solo)

2019
O Week, Michael Lett, Auckland (solo)
Hany Armanious, Phillip Lai and Yona Lee, Fine Arts Sydney, Sydney (group)
Caught Stealing, National Art School, Sydney (group)
Art Basel Hong Kong, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Hong Kong (group)
The Abyss, Griffith University Art Museum, Brisbane (group)
Pillar to Post, Sydney College of the Arts Gallery, Sydney (group)
Faux Pas, Air Space, Sydney (group)

2018
Hany Armanious, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney (solo)
The Like Button, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney (group)
The Shape of Things to Come, Buxton Contemporary, Melbourne (group)
Condo, Southard Reid, London (group)
Frieze, Southard Reid, London (group)

2017
Every Brilliant Eye: Australian Art of the 1990s, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (group)
Cross Currents, COMA Gallery, Sydney (group)
New World Order, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, New South Wales (group)
State of Play, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney (group)
Future Eaters, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne (group)
Hany Armanious / Patrick Hartigan, Neon Parc, Melbourne (group)
NADA Miami Beach, Southard Reid, London, (group)
Frieze London, Southard Reid, London (group)

2016

Frequently Asked Questions, Southard Reid, London (solo)
Hollow Earth, Michael Lett, Auckland (solo)
Soft Core, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Liverpool, Australia (group)
It's only castles burning, Station Gallery, Melbourne (group)

2015

Hany Armanious, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney (solo)
Wunderrūma: New Zealand Jewellery, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland (group)
Touch your brain, Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland (group)
Australian Painting, Minerva Gallery, Sydney (group)
Lean Cuisine, curated by Hany Armanious, Minerva Gallery, Sydney (group)

2014

A World Undone: Works from the Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland (group)
Selflok, City Gallery, Wellington (solo)
Post Picasso Contemporary Reactions, Picasso Museum, Barcelona (group)
Sunny and Hilly, Minnerva, Sydney (group)
Hany Armanious, Gallery Allen, Paris (solo)
On the Devolution of Culture, Rob Tufnell, London (group)

2013

Set Down, Michael Lett, Auckland (solo)
we go out inside, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney (solo)
Cast Recording, Prism Gallery, Los Angeles (group)
Direct Democracy, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne (group)
Living in the Ruins of the Twentieth Century, UTS Gallery, Sydney (group)
Reinventing the Wheel, Monash University of Museum of Art, Melbourne (group)

2012

The Plagiarist of My Subconscious, Southard Reid, London (solo)
The Golden Thread, Monash Museum of Art, Melbourne (solo)
Mutatis Mutandis, Session, Vienna (group)
Letter from Alice May Williams, Michael Lett, Auckland (group)
Chinatown: the sequel, ltd Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California (group)
you, your sun and shadow, Anderson Gallery, VCU arts, Virginia, USA (group)

2011

The Golden Thread, 54th Venice Biennale (Australian Pavilion) (solo)
Colour Bazaar: Nine Contemporary Works, Heide Museum of Modern Art,

Melbourne (group)

2010

Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Before & After Science, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (solo)
Birth of Venus, Foxy Production, New York, USA (solo)
Before and After Science, Adelaide Biennale, Art Gallery of South Australia (group)
Everything is near and inflorescent, forever and present, Michael Lett, Auckland (group)

2009

Galleria Raucchi/Santamaria, Naples, Italy (solo)
Uncanny Valley, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia (solo)
Tonight, Modern Institute, Glasgow (group)
O.K., Michael Lett, Auckland (group)
Zero..., Milan, Italy (group)

2008

The Oracle, Front Room, Contemporary Art Museum St Louis, USA (curated by Anthony Huberman) (solo)
Noli Me Legere, Michael Lett, Auckland (group)
Ceramica, Institute of Contemporary Art, Sydney (group)
Lost and Found: An Archeology of the Present, TarraWarra Biennial, curated by Charlotte Day, Healesville, Victoria (group)
Jesuvian Process, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York (group)

2007

Year of the Pig Sty, Foxy Production, New York, USA (solo)
Castillo/Corrales and Galeries Balice with Foxy Production, Paris (solo)
Year of the Pig Sty, Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)
Morphic Resonance, City Gallery of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand (solo)
Nueva Dimension, organised by Dick Evans, Hats Plus, London (group)
Surface Wave, Foxy Production, New York (group)
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia (group)
Group Show!, Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand (group)
Strange Cargo: Contemporary art as a state of encounter, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery, Bendigo Art Gallery, Orange Regional Gallery, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery and Tweed River Regional Gallery (group)

2006

Morphic Resonance, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia (solo)

Intelligent Design, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia (solo)
The Frontiers Are My Prison, Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)
Stolen Ritual, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia (group)
Before the Body-Matter, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, Australia (group)
Examples, Peloton, Chippendale, Sydney, Australia (group)
Busan Biennale, Busan Korea (group)
Adventures with form in space, Balnaves Foundation Sculpture Project, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
Selekta, West Space, Melbourne, Australia (group)
Uncanny Nature, curator Rebecca Coates, Australia Centre of Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia (group)

2005

Turns in Arabba, Michael Lett at LISTE05, Basel, Switzerland (solo)
Hany Armanious Hany Armanious: Central Core Component from the Centre of the Universe, Ocular Lab Inc., Melbourne, Australia (solo)

2004

The Centre of the Universe (Central Core/Hard Core/Soft Core) Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)
Stopping the World, Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)
The Cult, Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia (solo)
Art & Industry Urban Arts Biennial, Christchurch, New Zealand (group)
Every Day Minimal, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland (group)
Lights > Camera > Action: Critical Moments from the Govett-Brewster Gallery Collections 1969 – 2004, Govett -Brewster Gallery, New Plymouth (group)
Fantasy Island – A Block Project, Michael Lett, Auckland (group)
Artist's Project, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland (group)

2003

Art Nouveau Barbeque, Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia (solo)
Views of Space, Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)
Surface Tension, BLOCK, Sydney, Australia (group)
Hany Armanious, Jason Markou, Robert Pulie, Mary Teague, BLOCK, Sydney, Australia (group)
Hany Armanious, Steve Carr, Stuart Shepherd, Michael Lett, Auckland (group)
MCA Unpacked II, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia (group)
Islands in the Stream, Artspace, Sydney, Australia (group)
Bloom, Govett-Brewster Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand (group)

2002

Selflok, Ian Potter Museum, Melbourne, Australia (solo)

Space Cake, First Floor, Melbourne, Australia (solo)
Datura (with Mary Teague), Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney, Australia (solo)
Necessary Fictions, DeChiaria Gallery, New York, USA (group)
Line Up, The Happy Lion Gallery, Los Angeles, USA (group)

2001

Neo Phantom Thing (with Mary Teague), Lord Mori Gallery, Los Angeles , USA (solo)
Selflok, UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles , USA (solo)
The Disappearing I and Selflok, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney, Australia (solo)
Painting: an arcane technology, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne, Australia (group)
A Century of Collecting: 1901-2001, Ivan Doherty Gallery, Sydney, Australia (group)
Necessary Invention, Artspace, Sydney, Australia (group)

2000

Semi-Automatic, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney, Australia (solo)
Verso Süd, curated by Franz West, Palazzo Dorio Pamphilly, Valmonte (group)
GOLD!, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney, Australia (group)
Moet et Chandon fellows exhibition, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia (group)
Drive, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, Australia (group)
Plastika, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, Australia (group)

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

2022

Balamohan Singade, 'Tabula Rasa (Variations I – IV)', Michael Lett Documents

2014

Patrick Hartigan, 'Cloud Arch makes Sydney the city of lightness', The Saturday Paper, August 16, 2014
Sherman Sam, 'Critic's Pick: Hany Armanious', Artforum, 9 February, 2014
2013
Ian Geraghty, 'Reviews; Hany Armanious, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney', Frieze Magazine, Issue 158, Oct 2013
T.J McNamara, 'Light and illumination', The New Zealand Herald, 6 April 2013

2012

Anna Davis, 'Hany Armanious', MCA Sculpture Series, (Sydney: MCA, 2012)
Helen Hughes, "Hany Armanious - The Golden Thread", Art Guide, March 2012

Dan Rule, 'Casting about for images to re-evaluate the building blocks of the mundane', The Age, January 25 2012
Robert Nelson, 'The Golden Thread', The Age, March 7 2012

2011

Roberta Smith, 'Artists Decorate Palazzos and Vice Versa', The New York Times, June 8 2011
Sebastian Smee, "Vanity Case: Sebastian Smee on the 54th Venice Biennale", The Monthly, July 2011
Anne Ellegood (ed.), Hany Armanious - The Golden Thread, exh. cat. Australian Pavilion at the 54th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, Australia Council for the Arts, 2011, pp.152
Oliver Krischer, "Plundering the Uncanny Valley, Hany Armanious", Art Asia Pacific, No. 73, May/June 2011, pp. 120-129
Max Delany, 'Reflections on ILLUMInations-The 54th Venice Biennale', Art and Australia, Issue 49 No. 1, pp34-37
Stephanie Holt (ed.), Hany Armanious: The Golden Thread, (Sydney: Australia Council for the Arts, 2011)
Rosalie Higson, "Venetian window for alchemist," The Australian, April 26, 2011, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/arts>

2010

McGarry, Kevin, "Asked and Answered: Hany Armanious," T Magazine, December 6, 2010, <http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/06/asked-answered-hany-armanious/>
Michael Wilson, "Hany Armanious, Birth of Venus," Time Out New York, June 17, 2010, p. 68
Adam Fulton, "Digging the dirt all the way from Leichhardt to Venice Biennale," Sydney Morning Herald, February 19, 2010, <http://www.smh.com.au/>

2009

Adam Jasper, "Unreality Bites," Art World 8, April/May, 2009. pp. 74 - 80

2008

Adam Jasper, "Hany Armanious - Pragmatic metaphysics, painstaking copies and infinite pedestals," Frieze 114, April, 2008, pp. 154 - 155

2007

Roberta Smith, "Hany Armanious," The New York Times, November 23, 2007, E40
Robert Leonard, "Catalogue of Errors," Morphic Resonance: Hany Armanious, Brisbane, Institute of Modern Art and City Gallery, 2007, pp. 20 - 30
Jason Markou, "The Sorcerer's Crocs," Morphic Resonance: Hany Armanious, Brisbane, Institute of Modern Art and City Gallery

Palmer, Daniel, "Looking Back: Retrospectives," Frieze, no. 104, December - January 2007, p. 132

2006

Before the Body-Matter, exhibition catalogue, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne
Jacqueline Millner, "Review of Adventures with Form in Space: The Fourth Balnaves Foundation Sculpture Project," Eyeline, no. 62, Summer 2006/2007, p. 62
Ashley Crawford, Preview of "Uncanny Nature," The Age, Sunday, September 3rd
Dougal Phillips, Review of "Adventures in Form and Space, Balnaves Foundation Sculpture Project 2006," Art and Australia, Vol. 44, No. 2, Summer 2006, p. 280
Morphic Resonance, Institute of Modern Art, exhibition catalogue, 2006
Andrew Frost, "In the heart of the wood," Australian Art Collector, Issue 38, October - December 2006, pp. 154 - 163
Sebastian Smee, "Dot Complimentary," The Weekend Australian, September 9 - 10, 2006, pp. 18 - 19
John Mc Donald, "Lights, action, entertainment," Review of Adventures with Form in Space: The Fourth Balnaves Foundation Sculpture Project, in Spectrum, The Sydney Morning Herald, September 9-10, 2006, pp. 16-17
Rebecca Coates, "Hany Armanious" in Uncanny Nature, exhibition catalogue, Australia Centre of Contemporary Art, Melbourne
Selekta exhibition catalogue, West Space, Melbourne
Jason Markou, "Hany Armanious," Adventures with form in space, Balnaves Foundation Sculpture project, exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
The Art Life, Review of Intelligent Design, <http://www.artlife.blogspot.com/>
Diana Simmonds, "Two artists showcase latest work," Inside Entertainment, THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, June 18, 2006 p. 3
Sunanda Creagh, Review of Totemistical and Intelligent Design, 'Open Gallery', The Sydney Morning Herald, June 10-11 2006 p. 16
Betsy Brennan, "The Alchemist," Vogue Living, January/February 2006 pp. 85 - 86

2005

Jason Markou, "Turns in Arabba," exhibition catalogue, Michael Lett, Auckland
Julie Gough, "Art in Review for 2005," Art in Australia, Vol. 43, No. 2, Summer 2005 p. 276
Alex McDonald, "Where the Wild Things Are," 25 May 2005, www.stateart.com.au/sota/reviews/default.asp?fid=3497
John Daly-Peoples, "Eyeing the follies of insipid world culture," Fine Arts, National Business Review, 21 January 2005, p. 42
Andrew Clifford, "Cosmic campground," The New Zealand Herald, 19 January 2005, p. 6

Tessa Laird, "Thank you for recycling," New Zealand Listener, 28 January 2005, p. 50

Sunday Star Times, About Town, The Guide, January 16, 2005, New Zealand
Jane Davidson and Robert Leonard, "Hany Armanious," Gallery News, Nov-Feb 04-05

Hany Armanious, "Hany Armanious" catalogue essay, National Sculpture Prize and Exhibition, 2005, p. 14

2004

Peter Hill, "Free installations," Sydney Morning Herald (Spectrum), July 17-18, pp. 8-9

Anthony Byrt, "Art is a bunny rabbit," Listener, March 27 2004, p. 62

Anthony Byrt, "The Creepy Contemporary Sublime," Broadsheet, Feb-May, vol. 33 no. 1, pp. 53 - 55

"Bloom mutation, toxicity and the sublime", (exh. cat) Govett Brewster Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand, curated by Gregory Burke

2003

Simon Rees, "Hany Armanious at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery," Flash Art, vol. 36, no. 232, October 2003, p. 48

Michael Desmond, "Hany Armanious," Broadsheet, vol. 32, no. 3, September - November, p. 35

Chris Piper, "Strange Magic," Silver Limbo, Issue 1, p. 30

Peter Hill, "Zero Hour," Sydney Morning Herald, Weekend Edition 'Spectrum,' 2-3 August, 2003, pp. 12 - 13

Dominique Angeloro, "Down the rabbit hole," Sydney Morning Herald (Metro), July 25 - 31, 2003, p. 26

Margaret Plant, "The Journey from Field to Fieldwork 1968 - 2003," eyeline # 51, Autumn - Winter, 2003, pp. 44 - 46

Stephen Naylor, "Getting into the Giardini di Castello: Australia's representation at the Venice Biennale," Art & Australia, 40th Anniversary Issue, Winter, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 594 - 601

Mark Titmarsh, "Time and Tide: Decadal Shifts in Australian contemporary art," Art Monthly Australia #160, June, pp. 16 - 19

Stuart Koop, "Fieldwork: Australian Art 1968 - 2002, Broadsheet, vol. 32, no. 1, March, April, May, pp. 8 - 11

Daniel Thomas, "S & D at NGVA," Art Monthly Australia no. 157, March 2003, pp. 27 - 32

2002

Charles Green, "Into the 1990s: the decay of postmodernism," Fieldwork: Australian Art 1968 - 2002, exh. cat., National Gallery of Victoria, Federation

Square, Melbourne (November 2002 to February 2003), pp. 100 - 111

Alex Gowronski, "Dividing Lines," Broadsheet - Contemporary Visual Arts + Culture Newspaper, vol 31, no. 1, March - May, p. 25

Andrew Frost, "Mea Culpa," Australian Style, January, p. 28

2001

Eve Sullivan, "Hany Armanious: Prostrated offerings from a twentieth-century alchemist," Art & Australia, vol. 39, no. 2, p. 230, 231

Fergus Armstrong and Amanda Rowell, Selflok, catalogue essay, UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

"Hany Armanious Interview," UCLA Hammer Museum, <http://www.hammer.ucla.edu/exhibits/hanyarmaniousinterview.htm>

Courtney Kidd, "Elfin Magic," Sydney Morning Herald, 11 July

Natalie King and Bala Starr, "Suspended Animation," Painting: an arcane technology (exh. cat.), Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne

Lara Travis, "Off with the pixies," Like Art Magazine, no. 14

Lara Travis, "Hot Prospects," Vogue Australia, February

Courtney Kidd, "Romance within barbarism," Sydney Morning Herald, Wednesday, Jul 11

2000

Rex Butler, "Hany Armanious," Artext, no. 68, February - April

Benjamin Genocchio, "From shock to schlock," The Weekend Australian, Edition 1, Saturday 28 October, p. R19

William McAloon, "At the Wheel," Listener, March 25, p. 36, 37

Greg Bourke and Hanna Scott, Drive catalogue essay, Govett-Brewster Gallery, New Zealand

Megan Dunn, "Auto Art," Identity

Edward Colless, "Hany Armanious," Like Art Magazine, no. 11, p. 50, 51

Hanna Scott, "At the gallery," 25.07.00 (journal source not known)

"The Subterranean Hany Armanious," Vogue #2, p. 74

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, New Zealand

Chartwell Collection, Auckland, New Zealand

Dakis Joannou Foundation, Athens, Greece

Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA

Ipswich Art Gallery, Queensland, Australia

Hany Armanious, *Frequently Asked Questions*, 2015, pigmented polyurethane resin, dimensions variable.

LONDON

Hany Armanious

SOUTHARD REID

7 Royalty Mews

March 11 - May 21

Walter Benjamin famously asserted that reproduction and dissemination diminishes the auratic quality of an original artwork. Hany Armanious, however, tries to prove the opposite. Known for re-creating objects in polyurethane resin, his uncanny, hyperreal sculptures have a glow all their own. Keep in mind that they are nothing like Duane Hanson's figurative representations. Rather, the Egyptian-born Australian lovingly renders the detritus of the world.

His subjects tend toward the distressed, abandoned, or overlooked. For example, a child's scrawly drawing is transferred via an industrial dyeing process onto soft, furry carpet. Hung on the wall, this pair of works—both *Untitled*, 2016—act like (and of course, in a sense, *are*) paintings. Across the gallery's second-floor space, Armanious has strewn twenty-seven little blobs of cast Blu-Tack: *Logos*, 2015. They look like discarded remnants from a previous hang. Like the replicas of melted house candles casually placed on the second floor, *Frequently Asked Questions*, 2015, Armanious asks us to see and, more importantly, to question more closely.

In past exhibitions, Armanious has given us configurations of different objects, but this time, his selections are offered individually or in semiserialized groups. It is important to note that the artist is not simply playing with mimesis—Armanious is interrogating, gently, the nature of art and art production. How do you make sculpture? What do you pick to be your subject? Are these objects any less “meaningful” or “existential” because they appear slight and careworn?

—Sherman Sam



Hany Armanious, *Frequently Asked Questions*, 2015, pigmented polyurethane resin, dimensions variable.

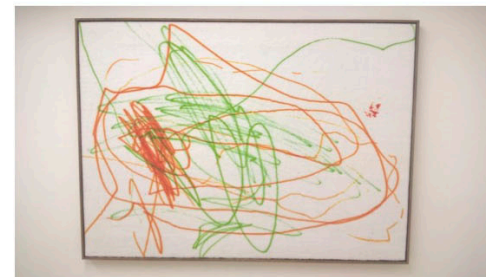


Southard Reid Gallery is hidden in a little mews, which you'd walk past if you didn't know what you were looking for. It doesn't have a sign so much as a label underneath a domestic doorbell, and it's part of a wall of terraced houses, which form the back of something like a square off the main road. I've found a guide in the form of Jonathan Watkins, Director of Ikon Gallery, and he strolls to the front door as though it's the one he returns to every evening. Backstreet galleries of London are something of a specialist

**Printed over
the huge
expanse are
the
drawings of
an infant;
more
precisely,
the
scribbles of
Armanious'
four year
old son.**

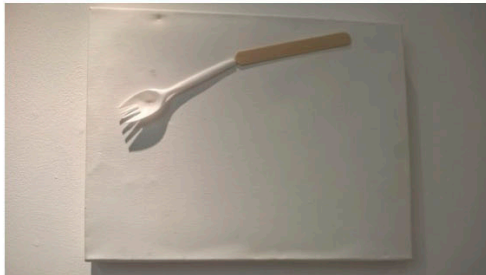
subject for him.

Inside, there are only two rooms open to the public showing work by Hany Armanious. The one on the lower level houses one work, on the right-hand wall. It's made of carpet – 'cheap, generic, nylon, think shopping centre', I'm told by the attendant – stretched over canvas, and must be 2 metres wide and almost as high. Printed over the huge expanse are the drawings of an infant; more precisely, the scribbles of Armanious' four year old son. I'm told that work on this series is necessarily coming to a close, as the little boy's projects become more sophisticated. To have caught his development at this stage – however fleeting it might have been – is truly charming. To memorialise, re-contextualise, and present it on an enormous scale in a gallery setting is philosophically interesting.



For Armanious, medium and context are crucial. Arguably, these aspects constitute the 'art' in his work, both conceptually and formally speaking.

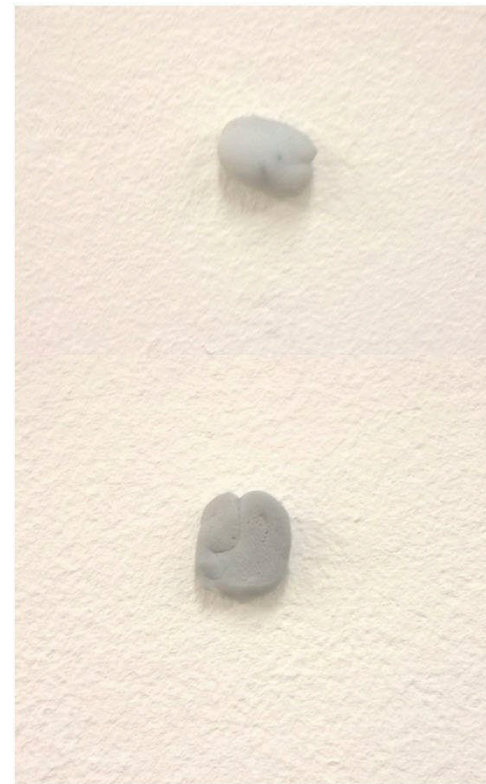
He's especially famous for his resin casts of everything from tables to sand, which constitute exquisitely accurate facsimiles, necessarily functionless. The art world has long come to terms with 'found objects' displayed side-by-side with more traditional artforms like paintings and sculpture. When found objects are derided, it is often with the argument that no skill or effort was needed to produce them. The artist and the artisan are becoming further divorced than ever, since signatures and ideas of the genius began to disrupt the uniform produce of medieval craftsmen, when artist and artisan were one and the same.



Armanious' work is so subversive, and so satisfyingly neat in its concept, because of its ostensible adherence to one strand of debate – the 'pro-readymade' – coupled with its faithfulness to an older school of work which demands rigour, precision and skill. It forces each camp to reconsider what they value, what they consider to be art, and how effort configures itself in respect to beauty: philosophical and

physical.

Upstairs at Southard Reid, Armanious has followed this line of thought to arrive at a conclusion which adds another dimension to the equation; impermanence, temporality. One series comprises a set of Blu Tack blobs, painstakingly cast in his trademark resin, complete with thumb prints and all the signs of having been manipulated and rolled between fingers which have left their mark.



The immediacy, and humanity, of this

**The
immediacy,
and
humanity,
of this
gesture is
both
underlined
and
undermined
by its
transposition
to a medium
other than
its original.**

gesture is both underlined and undermined by its transposition to a medium other than its original. Displayed alongside the Blu Tack is (a sculpture of) a group of candles burnt down to varying degrees. Temporality and mundanity are centre-stage again, as is the visual paradox of recent human intervention – now with a match, before with a thumb.

The detail in the models is somehow heart-rending, perhaps because all the effort gone into their creation has only frustrated the objects' potential. These are only sculptures, after all: in using the original objects to make art, Armanious has stripped them of all utility. However, he has gifted something too. These pieces – a child's scribbling, domestic ephemera – have been assigned all the weight of a masterpiece, as well as the labour. Armanious asks fundamental questions about art. What do we see? What do we make? What do we love?



EXHIBITIONS

Hany Armanious "The Plagiarist of My Subconscious" at Southard Reid, London

(<http://www.moussemagazine.it/hany-armanious-southard/>)

Hany Armanious' work stems from the initial act of looking. Consideration of objects and material often overlooked or discarded, provide the first step in the works' conception. Elements such as a water bottle, an air conditioning unit, an amateur carved totem, for example, appear in *The Plagiarist of My Subconscious* in informal arrangements placed on seemingly provisional supports. A key concern in much of his work is the framing and presentation of objects and the physical structures that allow these things to stand.

Having committed to a specific arrangement of objects, Armanious undertakes the moulding and casting of each of its parts, including framework or support structure, in pigmented resin. Through the arduous task of re-presenting these encounters with the humble or ordinary, all the elements – each crack of a table top, vestige of bubble wrap, masking tape, leftover glue and tubular hardware – is then imbued with a particular aura, a shifted material state, rarifying their place in the world. Armanious' casting practice has been punctuated by his working with semiprecious metals – the pewter-cast vintage film projector in the work *Dew Point* forms a central axis to the show, at once a material anomaly amongst the veristic resin casts, a literalisation of preciousness further underscored by its evident obsolescence as an original object, and also a physical symbol of seeing, suggestion of projected reality.

Despite the primacy of the selection and labour-intensive casting process, Armanious' sculptures manage to look as if they pre-exist, the chosen objects having found their way together on their own in some other, metaphysical space. They do this whilst embodying the inherent improbability in what is assembled and the contradictory material truth of what appears to be presented – they remain an approximation of that which they represent.

Surety and disbelief co-presented in material form and content underpins Armanious' practice but ultimately the sculptures act as discrete evocations of physical space, compositions reflecting the unconsciously simple but complex relationship between things. The title of Armanious' show comes from the said proclamation of Dali at the premiere of Joseph Cornell's 1936 film *Rose Hobart*, that Cornell had "stolen my dream, was the plagiarist of my subconscious". This theft of another's dream can be analogous to the act of extracting objects from the world and hijacking their identity in the service of art.

at Southard Reid, London (<http://southardreid.com/>)

until June 30, 2012

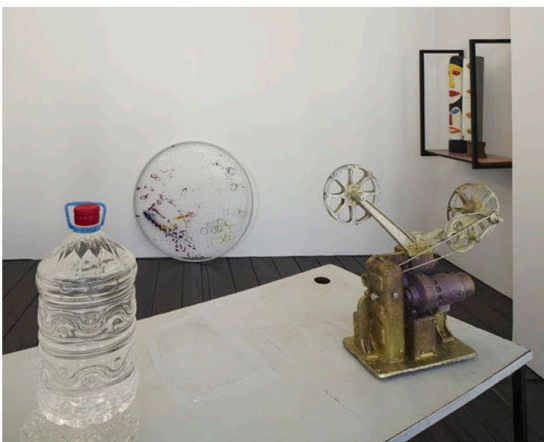




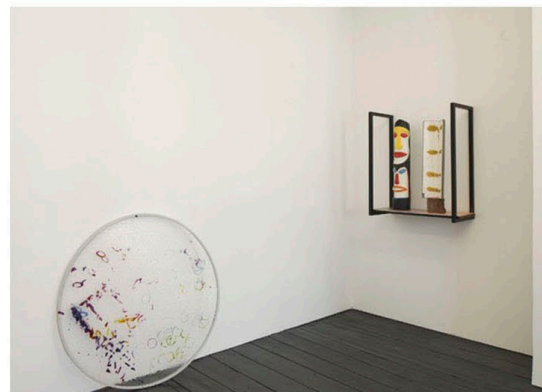
Hany Armanious, *Dew Point*, 2012



Hany Armanious, *Dew Point*, 2012



Hany Armanious "The Plagiarist of My Subconscious" at Southard Reid, London





Hany Armanious, *Depiction*, 2012





In former times towers, pyramids, candles, milestones and even trees had a phallic significance, and for Bouvard and Pécuchet everything became phallic. They collected swing-poles of carriages, chair-legs, cellar bolts, pharmacists' pestles. When people came to see them they would ask, 'What do you think that looks like?', then confided the mystery; and if there were objections they would shrug their shoulders pityingly:

– Gustave Flaubert *Bouvard And Pécuchet*¹

catalogue of errors

by robert leonard

HANY ARMANIOUS'S WORK used to perplex me. I was unsure where he was coming from. Was he making fun of superstitious neo-pagans, quaint crystal-gazers and Raelians, or was he one of them himself? I couldn't tell whether he believed in his elven foundries, psychedelic mythologies and new age cosmologies, or not. If he was sending up his occult sources, how had he become so *au fait* with them? I was afraid of discussing this with him for fear of getting it wrong and committing some dreadful gaffe, presuming him to be a believer when he was not, or vice versa. Now I realise that my confusion is central to his work.

ONE OF THE most persistent features of Armanious's work has been his fascination with the process of casting. It has become the backbone of his inquiry, as both method and subject. He seems obsessed with its practical as well as its semiological and metaphysical implications, which have become conflated in the work. His grail-quest has unfolded and deepened in successive shows without finding any ultimate resolution. Nothing is really explained or cleared up, and we get mired in complexity, elaboration, digression.

In 1993 Armanious discovered 'hot melt', a liquid petroleum-based vinyl that can be coloured and cooked up on a stove top, and which sets quickly to form a rubbery cast. It became his muse. He experimented with it, sometimes casting it into found objects, using them as moulds, or dropping it, molten, into water, where it would instantly congeal. Without a mould, the hot melt forms blobs and folds that betray its nature – its viscosity and the speed at which it sets. Armanious took liberties with the stuff, revelling in the diverse inchoate forms it would take, his efforts recalling wobbly viscera, blubber, toxic chemical residue, sump matter, blobs, dribbles, flanges, ectoplasm. One might imagine that the artist lacked control or that the material had a mind of its own.

In 1994, for the first solo show at a new dealer gallery, Armanious arranged the lurid technicolour products of his experiments on four basic workshop tables. Collectively, they suggested the yield of an

archaeological dig; a fabulous landscape of fragments to pick through, play with and compare; an out-of-control chemistry experiment; a kindergarten wet area. Armanious titled the show *Snake Oil*, advertising his beloved hot melt as an elixir, a Wild West cure-all (perhaps imagining it to be a quick fix for all his sculpting problems). The title also suggested a hoax, something bogus, having the wool pulled over our eyes, making the artist – the work's peddler – a charlatan. True to their name, Armanious offered his abject lumps for sale by the pound, inferring that their value was in the material rather than what he had done with it. *Snake Oil* seemed to make light of the new gallery's business and its congregation.

Despite the suggestion of a hoax, *Snake Oil*'s shapes remained fascinating, magical. According to Armanious, the title was a nod to Carlos Castaneda, the popular hippie-period author who introduced peyote-inspired quest philosophy and shamanism into popular culture. Castaneda's informant, Don Juan, the Mexican Yaqui Indian shaman, had explained to him that we are possessed by predatory reptiles that control our minds from their subterranean realm. 'There are no more dreams for man but the dreams of an animal who is being raised to become a piece of meat: trite, conventional, imbecilic', reported Castaneda, complicating the theme of human gullibility.²

Later, in 1998, Armanious created a neat and tidy sequel, *Untitled Snake Oil*. He poured the candy-coloured vinyl into drinking glasses, casting the space that a magic potion would fill. He turned out the solidified volumes like mousses and jellies, perching them triumphantly atop their inverted moulds, making them into dainty plinths, directing us to consider the oddness and variety of the glasses' internal spaces. It was as if, after the botched forms of *Snake Oil*, the alchemist had finally got it right. His upraised casts became a phalanx of curious comic characters, each with a different personality: some blunt, some pointy; some graceful, some squat. His variations-on-a-theme suggested abstracted figures (like chess pieces), Disneyland architecture (towers, domes, minarets), mushrooms and toadstools (with all their pixie-



psychedelic implications), and silicon breasts and sex toys.

If *Snake Oil* was fleshy and deranged, *Untitled Snake Oil* was shapely, perky and prim. While *Snake Oil* recalled viscera on a mortuary slab, *Untitled Snake Oil* was civilised; like teacakes on individual stands. The two states implied polarised brands of pleasure: the *jouissance* of the rude, excessive and meaty on the one hand; the discrimination of the refined, discrete and nicely-done on the other. And yet each state also seemed to imply the other. *Snake Oil* looked like a collection of failures produced on the way to making a successful casting, while *Untitled Snake Oil* looked like watercolour pallets, waiting to be dissolved. This dialectic of form and *informe*, of making and unmaking, has become a constant feature in Armanious's work.³

SNAKE OIL AND *Untitled Snake Oil* were like art-wares on display, but with his room-scale installation *Selflok* (1994-2001) Armanious looked behind the scenes, into the artist's studio, or rather a fantasy of it. 'It is almost as if we were witness to a primal scene in the life of the work', wrote Eve Sullivan at the time.⁴ A rig of cauldrons, alembics and steins rested on a makeshift platform of fake-wood polyester shelving crowned with a pergola. A frozen river of hot melt nectar descended a channel, coming to rest in a little pot. The scene suggested Santa's workshop, a hobbit foundry or elven distillery, a Middle Earth drug lab. The machine was littered with bits-and-bobs, like a giant mantelpiece. A collection of found ceramic tchotchkes, suggesting a gingerbread-house view of medieval Europe (the domestication of some distant woodcutter memory), communed with lumps of hot



melt, many of which appeared to have been cast in the ceramics, Armanious promiscuously dribbling his favourite substance into the hollows of upturned vessels and figurines as if to see what would happen. The result: a plague of 'abject "bunnies", gnomes and other anthropomorphic beings'.⁵

Selflok was fanciful. Much of it was produced on a Moët & Chandon residency in the French countryside, in idyllic Champagne country, at a time when Armanious was notoriously haunted by rustic stereotypes, explaining that he saw pixies in the texture of the wallpaper in his chateau. Like many of Armanious's works, it was an allegory of art-making. It was a classic illustration of *bricolage*, the French word for 'do it yourself'. Unlike the engineer, who is systematic, the *bricoleur* cobbles things together in a make-do fashion, using materials to hand in a provisional way, for purposes they were not designed for. Certainly



Selflok 1994-2001

Selflok was improvised from bizarre elements: a ceramic in the form of a hardcover book simultaneously propped up a shelf and provided a channel for hot melt, which dripped from it into a vase; there was packaging for two Elf Shelf Kits, the kitset shelving unit which had sparked the work; and a framed found photo of a strongman, standing before a huge woodpile, bearing a stove on his shoulder.

Selflok was sheer kitsch: a whimsical evocation of a supposedly pre-industrial artisanal past. A bowdlerised Teutonic fantasy, like something out of Walt Disney, it seemed to revel simultaneously in nostalgia and debasement. Back in 1939, in his classic essay 'Avant-Garde And Kitsch', Clement Greenberg railed against kitsch, which he saw as pretend-high-culture, marinated in sentimentality to make it palatable for the plebs.⁶ But *Selflok* suggested something else again if read in relation to 1980s contemporary art's 'high culture', those German neo-expressionists with their celebration of folk-nationalist traditions: Anselm Kiefer, with his preposterous occult beliefs (frequently passed off as weighty historical engagement), and Georg Baselitz, with his love of woodland tropes (his preference for the gnome over the angel). *Selflok* didn't add something bogus to high culture so much as make explicit something already bogus within it, as if flagging high culture's unadmitted truth.

AN AGE-OLD PROCEDURE, casting remains the basis of contemporary manufacturing. Just about every mass-produced thing made of plastic or metal is made by casting. Its role in art is more specific. Traditionally casting has not been a primary medium, but a means of reproducing fragile carved or moulded forms in durable metal. In the second half of the 20th century, however, artists were drawn to casting as a process in its own right, often treating the world-as-they-found-it as a mould.⁷ Art's interest in casting-as-process was keyed to a shift from representation to literalism, which became most apparent with conceptual art in the 1960s and 1970s. In her famous essays 'Notes On The Index', Rosalind Krauss argued that conceptual artists preferred

collecting impressions, traces or measurements of the world to picturing it.⁸ A textbook example was Richard Serra repeatedly casting molten lead into the edge where floor meets wall in the Leo Castelli Gallery in 1969. Armanious engages with the literalism of ‘process art’ while also aware of artists who were attracted to casting for its occult appeal, its potential for contagious magic.

Armanious called a 2004 show *The Cult*. A cult is a small community of believers at odds with the mainstream, galvanised by conviction. We share the same world, but for the cult members it is animated by altogether different meanings. Armanious’s show featured three still-life arrangements, collections of similar-looking objects. One had the sense of looking at an obscure ethnographic-museum display where, lacking context, one couldn’t tell whether what one was seeing were mundane utilitarian objects or primitive religious fetishes. Although the objects seemed modest, the titles hinted at a grand obscure ‘cultish’ significance. Then again, the titles also seemed to strain plausibility, as though mundane objects had been mislabelled, wilfully or cluelessly. There was a sense that they could be viewed or valued either from within or from without a framework of belief, appearing radically different in either case.⁹

The symmetrical bulbous forms in *Finding The Assemblage Point* (*Clay Pipes From ARABBA*) looked like they had been turned, either carved on a lathe or modelled on a potter’s wheel, but in fact all were cast. Recalling peppermills, lamp stands, lightbulbs and Arabic instruments, they were made of wax, suggesting ex votos; some were formed around wicks, making them candles. *Forging The Energy Body* (*Swegypt*) featured castings of bells and horn speakers in aluminium and pewter; perhaps making an analogy between speakers and bells as sound-generators. Amanda Rowell stressed magical links, noting that: ‘Bells are employed in shamanistic rituals, and the material – pewter – has a connection to fortune telling in the northern European practice of casting molten pewter into water at New Year’s Eve and reading the resulting form like tea leaves in order to learn what the coming year

holds. Pewter is also a classic material of trinkets and lucky charms.’¹⁰ Of course, bells and pewter have just as many banal applications.

The groupings also suggested practical issues for casting. In order to cast the interior spaces of the bells, Armanious had to remove the clappers, which were cast and exhibited separately. Continuing this chain of logic, he found a related formal dilemma in the task of filling a peppermill with peppercorns, a process analogous to casting:



Finding The Assemblage Point (*Clay Pipes From ARABBA*) 2004

the spindle got in the way. This was illustrated by a short video on a monitor incorporated into *Forging The Energy Body* (Swegypt). Armanious's concern with the 'problem of the core' seemed to relate to the way many of his objects were formed around central wicks, rods or voids. Armanious focused on this 'problem of the core' as if freighted with huge metaphysical import, although how or why it was a 'problem' was a question left hanging.

Armanious also stretched the idea of casting. *Scaring Away The Human Form* (Death As Adviser) involved the most primitive casting technique. Forms were made by pouring two-part polyurethane into a sack of peppercorns. The fluid traveled through the peppercorns until it set, bonding with them, forming peppery poo-shapes. The work



Forging The Energy Body (Swegypt) 2004

exemplified Armanious's obsession with casting as 'the exploration of a cavity by a viscous substance'. 'In the case of the peppercorns, the cavity did not exist prior to the introduction of the casting medium which permits the discovery, retrieval and revelation of a form that could not otherwise have been known.'¹¹

THE CULT, with its small objects, was modest and underwhelming at first glance. By contrast, Armanious's follow-up show *Centre Of The Universe* (Central Core, Soft Core, Hard Core) (2004) was unduly grand. It elaborated on his growing preoccupation with the core. It took the form of an orientalist folly, a 'sheik's tent'. Within, a circle of vaguely Middle-Eastern-looking Axminster carpet was littered with peppercorns, whose aroma filled the air. On top of it, a foot-operated potter's wheel was hoisted up on saw horses, with peppercorns in its slop tray. On the wheel stood a turned phallic form, like a gigantic Brancusi-esque peppermill turned in clay. It rose magisterially to the roof, where it penetrated a horn speaker at the apex of the tent like a trumpet mute.

From the horn blared Armanious's *Arabba* soundtrack, of ABBA pop songs covered cheesy muzak-style on synthesised Arabian instruments. As Jason Markou observed, 'The key is changed to a minor scale and the tempo slowed. At this key and speed, *Arabba* aspires to the hypnotic and somber musicality of Islamic devotional song.'¹² *Arabba* conflates the Nordic ABBA and Arabia, blue-eyed Scandanavians and swarthy moors, dancing queens and whirling dervishes.¹³ As we were at 'the centre of the universe' perhaps Armanious was hinting at a cosmic 'singularity', as occurs in the vortex of a black hole or at the birth of the universe, when the laws of physics don't hold and relativities collapse.

Around the 'central core' were two C-shaped tables. Inscribed on one was a 'double C' Chanel logo, marked 'crop circles', perhaps reminding us of the theory that crop circles are formed from the air – the crop circle being simply a cross-section of a bell-shaped field of emanation. On the tables a variety of turned-looking cast objects were