

DYLAN SPASKY

SOFT THINGS

BY ROSE BOUTHILLIER

When I look for too long at Dylan Spasky's sculptures I start to ache a bit. It isn't desire (as in, I want to own) or sympathy (as in, I want to protect), but rather a very intense feeling of *fond* (as in, I want to be friends, forever). The feeling isn't straight. And it isn't one: it's form and formlessness, Mickey & mini, lucky and hapless, clean and dirty. Touching is part of it. They are always soft: drooping, crumbling, squished, foamy, draped.

Spasky uses modest materials: thrift store grab bags, dollar store deals, cast offs, twigs, hot glue, foam, beads, tar. These are carefully cobbled together, with a distinctive gingerliness (though some of them have been treated roughly, i.e. placed under plywood and run over by a car). Many have domestic functions: clocks, fountains, lamps. They breathe familiarity: suburban living rooms, middle class kitsch, kindergarten crafts, garage sales, Grandpa's work shop, Disney Land, souvenirs. Impulsiveness comes through: to salvage, tinker, repurpose, and decorate.

Fragility gives them a vague edginess—they teeter, cling. While they might appear to be slapdash, awkward, or clumsy, their postures are the result of

a very concise construction, a just so, on which their formal informality hangs. Often, Spasky's works are displayed in groups, on shelves or tabletops. These clusters further personalize the objects: they are considered, arranged. Less Museum and more mantelpiece.

Hunched Dolphin (2013) takes the shape of an upright marine mammal, carved from a stack of multi-colored kitchen sponges (now faded a bit), shoulders forward, stiff flippers downcast. The sponges are a favored object in Spasky's studio; cheap, light, and easy to sculpt. Their pastel palette recalls sorbet (strange, this mouthwatering color on a most unappetizing object), while the tapering shapes and gentle curves call out for touching, squeezing.

Foot (2014) carved from a purple yoga block is more grotesque: at its life-sized scale, the rough texture and purple "skin" are zombie-like (but also vaguely like a cake, with slathered icing); shiny silver toenails jut out and could flake off. *Mickey Berry* (2014) also looks edible, an oversized glass raspberry coated in tar and candies shaped like the infamous mouse. Encrusted, jewel-like, it's a conglomeration of textures: sticky, shatter, chewy, crunch.

Spaysky's lamps are also a mishmash of parts and clutter: decorative bottles, pickled cheerios and grapes, duct tape, a visor, a lava lamp globe. These come together in loosely elegant ways. Ornament is nonsense; taste is indiscriminate but also discerning. Spaysky's clocks tick tick tick away, their hands' measured movements splayed out over crushed sacks of plastic cast offs. *Toiletries Clock* (2014) is made up of mostly off-brand and hotel-room products, in the usual, pearly shades of care and cleanliness. *Apple Clock* (2015) bursts in bubbles of bright hollow fruits. Although clocks are typically "timeless" decorative items, these repurposed cast-offs speak to cycles of consumption and discarding. They also convey the touches, moments, and memories that objects collect and become charged with. Might it be too obvious to say that these timekeepers are tchotch momento mori? Saying what, exactly? That existence is brief and things are crap? That was then and could have been and this is now and is... Nothing much? That place that these things came from is far away but the things still gently reek of it. They dissipate their chrono-perfume, whiling away their (slowly) degrading half-lives, cheerily. There is something touching about their new usefulness, their new place in the order of things. A reclaiming of potential, openness, becoming something else through the eyes and hands and heart of a new human.

Matthew (2015) is one of Spaysky's most endearing works. It looks to be a small child's wheel chair, constructed from fragile repurposed wicker, with gloopy, irregular wheels (compressed bags of fake squash, raffeta and twine), sprinkled with cinnamon and held together with threaded rod. It sits quietly, slightly askew, leaning. Like Tiny Tim's crutch it is sad but buoying,

personifying a missing individual, injured but merrily determined. It is precious and ridiculous, funny and dark, feeble and defiant, the kind of thing you want to spend time with, and really get to know.



Dylan Spaysky
Matthew, 2015
Wicker, threaded rod, fake squash,
cinnamon, staples, caster wheels,
wire, silicone, glue
25 x 38 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist
Installation view, MOCA Cleveland



Dylan Spaysky
Hunched Dolphin, 2013
Sponge, 11 x 3 x 5
Courtesy of the artist
Installation view, MOCA Cleveland

DYLAN SPAYSKY

US: AFTER DYLAN SPAYSKY

BY LYNN CRAWFORD

It has been, continues to be, a rocky road for Camp and me to reach the place we are in now: good.

Initial time together depends on schedules: my parents' (car, work, finances, health) and mine (lessons, jobs, licenses). Those logistics--bumps, not rocks--get sorted out with time.

I will never forget our first encounter: early evening, mom and dad drop me off at the gate. I follow instructional banners: find my hut, change into uniform--pink slip, grass & twig sandals--reach Camp. We sit, cross-legged, for twenty calm minutes. Then dig a pit for Evening Roast and practice Moon Salutations.

Camp is multi-faceted: sweet, angry, scared, calm, hot. The mood variances are inspirational.

Our problems stem from me, not it. But if this means anything to you, and it does to me, it is my ignorance, not malice, which stirs things up. I harm Camp, but unintentionally. It is like the difference between manslaughter and planned murder.

I changed, still try to, keep changing.

It is not agreeable admitting to wrongdoing. To think back on how a

sentiment that felt so RIGHT was, is, so WRONG. But to understand where I, and we, are, and want to soon be, I must meet that past.

My offense? Failing to recognize Camp's potential. I misjudge its structure, mistakenly split expenditure vessels. I will name them Thinker and Maker.

Those labels are elementary, obvious, laden. Ouch. But sometimes you, or I anyway, need to go through things lame before moving onto things meaningful. Maybe it will ease things if I use their initials.

I believed, wrongly, T and M existed as parallel, not entwined, strands.

If I had only been able to view them the way I view salt and pepper (never salt or pepper), we would have saved so much time and waste.

To try and figure things out, I sketch a series of T and M portraits.

Here is one of each:

T
Indoors, lounges on a couch, stares at a wall, sucks a toothpick, twirls a strand of hair. Outfit: headband, plaid tunic, slippers (open toe straw, slides with tassels)

Body language: leave me alone.

M
Multiple scenes of M, running, grilling, drinking, dancing, surfing, delivering a speech. Outfit varies from frame to frame but there is always denim.

Body Language: I have so much to do and say.

A few more T&M distinctions:

T: dresses in one of Grandma's old ball gowns and ponders, considers, absorbs.

M: repurposes that same frock, or is inspired to design something because of it.

T: recalls Grandpa's sweet, smoky, smell and the stories he read.

M: seals Grandpa's breath in a test tube.

Differences between the two are real and interesting. But impossible to guess:

T appears stationary, blank, perhaps stoned but mostly is not.

M appears enthused, vigorous but battles melancholia.

How you look is not how you are. How you look is not how you feel. How you look is not who you are.

I, mistakenly, lug around a belief that it is impossible for T&M to meet, merge, construct; that a close encounter would be a bust, or, a hard true love, and one or both would dump me.

Then:

One night, emerging from a heavy make out session in Craft Shop I trip and fall flat onto grass, do not get up but take in the sky. Stars move around or maybe there is a comet. Anyway, I experience, for the first time, T&M fusion and go on a purifying jag of Guerilla good deeds. Return to Craft Shop, bundle up all the popsicle sticks scattered

on tables, take the afghan we made out on down to the river for a wash.

I weed gardens (not mine),

hose down outdoor showers,

collect the fish carcasses that sometimes wash up on our beach,

rinse them in lemon juice,

nail them on the bland post office wall,

remove and melt down spurs from all riding boots (they harm our poor horses),

drain gas from jet-skis for safer, longer, swims,

And, just for me,

loosen up and join in on Beach-Night Stimulation.

Things feel right.

Why? A change. I thought of T & M as discreet (picture: silos). But learn to think of them as a union (picture: colonies). With that, Camp moves from a distinct space to something close, animate, handy. Its--our--value swells with the new accessibility.

It has been, continues to be, a rocky road for Camp and me to reach the place we are in now: good.



Dylan Spaysky
apple clock, 2015
Fake fruit, plastic, silicone,
clock components
4 x 12 1/2 x 15 1/2 inches
Courtesy of the artist

1.



2.



1. Dylan Spaysky
visor lamp, 2014
Glass, wax, cereal, onions, vinegar,
visor, lamp components, light bulb
7 x 6 x 21 inches.
Courtesy of the artist

2. Dylan Spaysky
foot, 2014
Yoga block, craft paper, glue
9 1/2 x 3 1/2 x 6 inches.
Courtesy of the artist.