

Art in New York

Trish Tillman at Asya Geisberg Gallery

Louise E. Decoppet

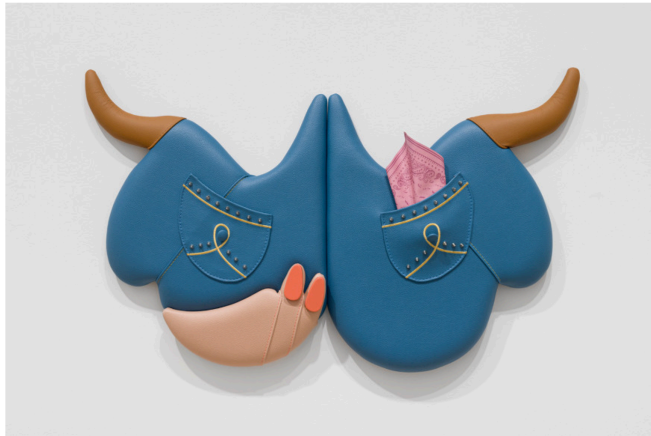
June 10, 2024



NightLite (2024). UV print on nappa leather, vegan leather, wood, foam, metal hardware, hydrocol, polymer clay, acrylic.
39 x 23 x 2.50 in. (99 x 58.42 x 6.35 cm).

Trish Tillman's fourth and most recent solo exhibition in New York is as intellectually stimulating as it is visually engaging. The installation of her twelve wall-mounted sculptural assemblages displayed sparsely along the gallery's walls underscores the unique and provocative nature of their multilayered themes related directly to the show's slippery title: *Grooming Kit*. As a result, viewers are compelled to contemplate and closely examine each work in which the artist eerily synthesizes eroticism with childhood imagery and states of innocence.

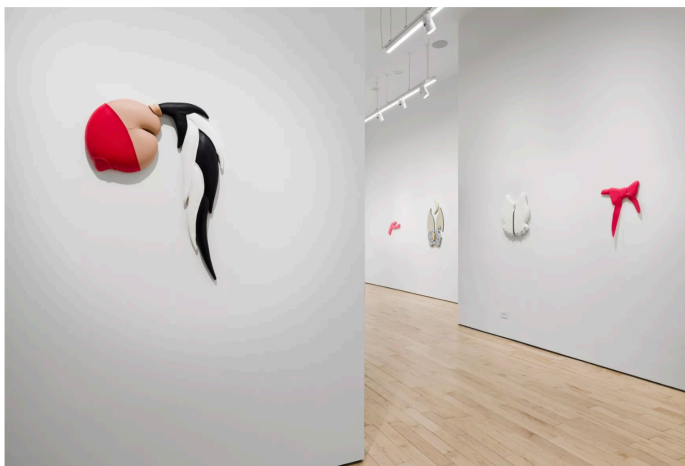
Utilizing industrial materials, fetish objects, and tokens from girlhood, Tillman showcases metal studs, zippers, hankies, flesh lights, butt plugs with horsehair tails, and polished stiletto fingernails in tandem with bows, ice cream cones, a strawberry, a unicorn, and cartoon imagery. In so doing, she simultaneously points to how "grooming" can refer to either preening oneself to attract a partner or manipulating a child into sexual abuse. For instance, in *NightLite*, a tiny silicone vagina peeks out from the neck of a perfume bottle nestled at the bottom of the "V" of truncated lace- and fishnet-patterned "legs," while a butter-yellow, tufted leather pillow, in the shape of crescent-moon, hovers suggestively above.



Backseat (2023). Vegan leather, hand-dyed leather, UV print on leather, thread, vegan leather buttons, wood, foam, embroidery, metal hardware.
23.5 x 36 x 2.5 in (59.69 x 91.44 x 6.35 cm)

Extending this line of inquiry into technological realms, the ambiguous, abnormal configurations of these works uncannily recall the abnormal mashups created by AI image generators that cause unsettling double-takes. Take, for example, *Cherry Lane*, in which a smooth ample ass bulges out of a tight red skirt that shapeshifts into a deep cleavage busting out of a red décolleté. The long ponytail of black-and-white vegan leather locks that pops out of the butt-cum-boobs can just as easily be seen as a full furry tail butt plug. The rest of the body—which could have provided more clues—is elided into a simple nipple-like bump on the other end of the sculpture.

Collectively, these works prompt uncomfortable questions: Could these riveting yet dehumanizing tableaux be a warning that our world of computer-generated perfection and data-driven optimization is increasingly grooming us into cheating ourselves out of living and growing? She dismembers sexual organs, and then, outlandishly, recombines them synthetically. Do we risk grooming ourselves, manipulating or replacing the flaws that make up our irreplicable selves? The artist's taut leather upholstery, machine-like stitching, and even riveting, all of which belies their handmade origins, would seem to support this conclusion. It is indeed a testament to the artist that her show should manage to interlace all these heady concepts with a dash of visual levity for sanity.



Cherry Lane (2024). Hand-dyed leather, vegan leather, thread, polymer clay, acrylic, wood, foam.
32.5 x 26 x 2 in (82.55 x 66.04 x 5.08 cm)

This exhibition is organized by *Asya Geisberg Gallery, N.Y.*, where it is on view from April 26 to May 25.

<https://snapeditions.com/2024/06/10/trish-tillman-asya-geisberg/>