

# SIGNALS at Someday Gallery

By JONATHAN OROZCO, August 2022



SIGNALS, Someday Gallery’s current show running until July 29, is the space’s largest and most ambitious exhibition yet. A selection of artists with such diverse practices like fiber arts, cast metal, and assemblage were chosen because of their unified vision of the cyborg. They include, Ivana Bašić, Sula Bermúdez-Silverman, Olivia Erlanger, Brittnei Ann Harvey, Madeline Hollander, Umico Niwa, Rachel Rossin, Jennifer Rose Sciarrino, Pauline Shaw, Catherine Telford Keogh, Alison Veit, and Isabel Yellin. In fact, this is the third version of this exhibition Yellin curated. This iteration was co-curated with her colleagues Jeanette Bisschops and Anaïs Castro.

“The impetus for these projects was my realization during covid lockdown that so many non-binary and female sculptors are having a real conversation materially and conceptually about the mind, the body, and the home, and we are hardly ever in the same room,” Yellin says. “These artists are all contending with notions of otherness, of the internal psychological jungle we are all juggling, as well as the dystopian world we are currently faced with. With this version of the show, the three of us all found hope in these artist’s ability to re-imagine what is possible.... The fact the opening coincided with the fall of Roe is just all the more reason to continue to bring the creative community together in new ways.”

Here, biology is the subject, and biomorphism is the method. Objects are shaped like robot dogs used to guard international borders, germinating seeds that look like sex toys, or even melting bones. They’re also uncomfortable objects, something on the verge of coming to life as a specter.

Yellin’s work, *What’s in That?*, is a surreal composition of an armature with entangled fabric entrails. “This series is my attempt to actualize paranoia,” Yellin says.



Isabel Yellin, *What’s in That?*, 2022.

“I feel like at this point it is weird if you aren't paranoid about anything from surfaces to your phone to our government. The proliferation of conspiracy theories on the internet is astounding, leading to violence, political turmoil, and mental illness. It feels like this uncanny micro-, macro-moment of my personal history butting heads with a very dark moment in our culture.”



Catherine Telford-Keogh, *Geologic Trough-Cum-Bathtub (Stripes)*, 2022

fuels which are compressed ancient beings,” she says. From overhead, the work looks cellular. Each object, a chain, words, or car air fresheners, look like functional enzymes or bits of DNA; an inert system from formerly living creatures.

Artist Umico Niwa’s cast-metal sculptures are functional illusions. They look like rotting tree branches, or like an insect that has been infected by a horrific fungal infection now with a porous, pimply surface. “In terms of environmentalism, I don’t know if there’s hope for people if when you look at a tree or a plant, that’s all that you see, and you don’t have that deep level of empathy or intimacy or connection.” She says. “I’m trying to find different ways to be able to make those connections.” Though many of her other works are much more human-like, with appendages that look like limbs or fruits that are used in place of heads or fingers, her three small-scale sculptures are far less literal. Titled under the Baby Shoe Series, these objects become functional fashion objects. Maybe as camouflage or even a testament to the erosion of human-nature boundaries.



Umico Niwa, *Baby Shoes Series: The First Heel*, 2021



Brittni Ann Harvey, *Governor of the Allegory (Stumbling Robot Dog)*, 2022

The uncanny mixes with the domestic, which can be a site for domination and service, but can equally be a point for care, love and pleasure. In the case of Catherine Telford Keogh, they’re a testament to preservation and longevity. *Geologic Trough-cum-Bathtub (Stripes)* is a visually-enticing tactile pool. With an extensive materials list, including objects from the domestic-sphere like Plexiglass, Yankee Candle Fragrance Spheres, Advil, Q-tips, as well as biomatter, like desiccated butterflies and beef jerky. The shape of the container comes from a CAD diagram the artist found online. The kicker here is Telford Keogh understands plastic and oil through their plant and animal origins. “Plastic comes from fossil

Some artists go even further with their concept of biomimicry, Brittni Ann Harvey, whose *Governor of the Allegory (Stumbling Robot Dog)* appears to be fashioned after robotic cyborg surveillance dogs used in borderland areas. The dog wears an embroidered religious garb or cushion used in Christian church services. It almost feels like you’re encouraged to rest your head or hands together for prayer. They could be read as symbols of power or domination, particularly when placed on top of a wire frame with an uncannily shaped dog. It could also be seen as a type of spiritual relic used in the service for enlightenment.

As a whole, the show can be encapsulated into a theme of biomorphism or biomimicry, with the transformative process of geology and time used to produce life. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. WM