



Sylvie Auvray, *Untitled*, 2019, ceramic, plaster, fabric, 52 × 20 7/8 × 9 7/8".

Sylvie Auvray

GALERIE LAURENT GODIN

Sylvie Auvray, who divides her time between Los Angeles and Paris, adds hints of Finish Fetish gloss to what can otherwise be described as raw and rugged, art informel–inspired paintings and sculptures, managing to channel the likes of Jean Fautrier and Kenneth Price at once. Her recent show “ *Les Cambuses* ” (The Shacks) featured lowly misshapen ceramic animals, convex graffiti-style paintings on plaster overlaid with resin, and ordinary brooms transformed into mystical scepters thanks to elaborate ceramic handles. The peculiar dichotomy of Auvray’s simultaneously crude and finessed oeuvre is perhaps best articulated by the French term *jolie laide* (pretty-ugly). Working with media that do not typically go together (plaster mixed with ceramic is a favorite), Auvray beautifies her intuitive improvisations with surprising embellishments such as Limoges-style gilding or bits of Lanvin and Sonia

Rykiel textiles.

Sometimes Auvray's unusual combinations of materials appear to blend organically, as in *Grand baton* (Big Stick; all works cited, 2019), a hefty tree branch swathed in a gummy mixture of plaster, ceramic, resin, fabric scraps, and shellac. Wrapped around the dead branch, the motley dressings suggest colorful fungi engaged in enchanted metamorphoses. Elsewhere, however, Auvray's combined media do not coalesce as harmoniously. *Chat qui vomit* (Vomiting cat), a brown-glazed clay kitty oozing sickly yellow- and orange-tinged plaster from its mouth, illustrates a clear distinction—a physical repulsion, in fact—between two of the artist's signature materials. Another cat sculpture was one of the most materially perplexing works on view and epitomized Auvray's penchant for alchemy. In *Untitled*, a small ceramic feline perches on a plinth made from an armature of three broom handles covered with fabric and plaster. Gingerly decorating the plinth with smudgy yellow and red car paints (a material favored by the Los Angeles Finish Fetish artists for its iridescent sheen and one that Auvray began experimenting with in 2013 when she shared her LA studio with an auto mechanic), Auvray conjured a hunk of graffitied concrete. The creature on top of this pillar of urban detritus, meanwhile has been treated to a glimmering metallic glaze, which transforms the lowly ally cat into an unexpected heroic bronze.

Brooms provided another leitmotif. The fact that brooms and cats—especially when they appear together—evoke witches and sorcery is no coincidence. An installation of nineteen brooms spanning a back wall of the gallery called to mind the “Sorcerer's Apprentice” segment of Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940), in which Mickey Mouse's enchanted sweepers multiply and run amok. Like Disney, Auvray anthropomorphizes the inanimate, endowing each broom with an uncanny sense of autonomy and a unique personality. Some of her elaborate ceramic broomsticks appear quite witchy, with bulging eyes and hook noses. Others, like a rainbow synthetic duster whose knobby blue-black glazed handle terminates in a pair of rodent-like ears and a single white horn, veer more toward the totemic. Although Auvray's brooms are fanciful, she does not ignore her subject's feminist connotations. Like a fairy godmother, the artist has transformed humble domestic

tools symbolizing female oppression into attention-commanding divas completely unfit for work. Emancipation through metamorphosis: a true fairy-tale ending.

—Mara Hoberman

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