

Murrell, Kat, "Art and Consumerism," *Express Milwaukee*, April 13, 2014

Art and Consumerism

Haggerty exhibit sorts through the stuff of life



"Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that's the stuff life is made of," so wrote Benjamin Franklin in 1746. Franklin was right about time but three current exhibitions highlight the idea that "stuff of life" in contemporary society involves a lot of physical stuff.

"Between Critique and Absorption: Contemporary Art and Consumer Culture" presents six contemporary artists whose conceptual works stop shy of outright protest against consumerism and the capitalist system, yet also sharply avoid admiration.

Dan Peterman's *Love Podium* is modeled after a Victorian love seat in which two seats are placed opposite each other. Peterman makes this a soapbox rather than a love seat by elevating it on a platform, and the podiums facing opposite directions suggest a dysfunctional debate. It's crafted of plastic, about the amount used by one individual in a year. The underlying questions can be a source of debate: What do we care about, what do we use and where does it go?

Shinique Smith says, "Our bodies are imprinted onto the fabric we wear." This alignment between body and the cloth with which we cover ourselves forms the basis of *Bale Variant No. 0022*. This towering bale is comprised of used and new clothing, representing the practice of binding up and shipping out tons of unwanted items to other countries on other continents. Though clothing is a marker of personal identity, we tend to be very unsentimental as we cast these garments off in favor of new threads and novelty.

The life cycle of stuff that has been used, kicked around and generally ignored except for its functional value gets the spotlight by artist Kaz Oshiro. Oshiro creates fantastic, three-

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dimensional trompe-l'oeils; a convincingly messy microwave, battered truck tailgate and seemingly pilfered garbage can from a fast food restaurant are placed in the gallery space. They are facsimiles of the real things, made with paint, canvas and Bondo. Dirty as they look, they achieve value through their exceptional craftsmanship, yet at the same time recall the hollow echoes of the anonymous junk of daily life.

"Between Critique and Absorption: Contemporary Art and Consumer Culture" continues at the Haggerty Museum of Art (530 N. 13th St., Marquette University campus) through May 18.