

The Button Show

Artists: Alexis Garrett Stodghill, Amalia K. Amaki, André St. Clair, Beau McCall, Camilla Taylor, Hannah Battershell, Io Palmer, Lisa Kokin, Petros Chrisostomou, Ruben Natal-San Miguel, and Tavet Gillson

Curated by Souleo

January 21 - March 12, 2016

EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION

Since one of the earliest known buttons found at Mohenjo Daro in the Indus Valley (now Pakistan) nearly 5000 years ago, buttons have gone from being ornaments to signifiers of economic and social status to commonplace mass produced objects. Buttons (derived from Old French "bouton") presently occupy a space of familiarity in our everyday lives predominantly as a fastener for one's clothes. As clothing buttons in their current ubiquitous state are largely viewed as seemingly insignificant, visual artists are reimagining these objects into works of art.

The Button Show focuses on artists whose interaction with the object challenges our perspective regarding the aesthetic and conceptual possibilities of buttons. Each artist has experienced buttons as an everyday part of their subconscious engagement with the world, and at some point, consciously decided to make that interaction a critical component of their contemporary artwork. Thereby each artist attempts to evoke responses from the viewer by using buttons to highlight the extraordinary in the commonplace.

EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION

The exhibition traverses numerous thematic points that collectively represent the limitless directions of artistic production in buttons. Several of the artists reference the role of buttons as adornments, employing the object to embellish clothing and draw attention to unique and varied button designs and materials. Some explore buttons through the lens of its history as a symbol of wealth, power and royalty. Buttons as a communicator of views on class, politics, race, gender, sexuality, religion and education have evolved as artists rework the medium. Personal narratives and processes of socialization are evident in the works of several artists recalling buttons as markers of childhood experiences and rites of passage. Others combine buttons to create dramatic new physical forms that blur the lines between art, craft and design. Digital technology has advanced the ability to alter perceptions of reality and present minutiae of everyday life, such as buttons, in richly imaginative ways. Environmental consciousness is present throughout the exhibition as artists repurpose often-discarded items.

Collectively each artist engages in the act of "pushing buttons" beyond their normative contextualization to expand the categorization, interpretation and appreciation of this artistic medium.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Lisa Kokin, *Sleep*, 2003.

Buttons, chicken wire, thread, spray paint, 18 x 15 x 15
in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Lisa Kokin, Ancestor, 2003.

Buttons, chicken wire, thread, spray paint, 13.5 x 9 x 11
in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Profile View

Lisa Kokin, Ancestor, 2003.

Buttons, chicken wire, thread, spray paint, 13.5 x 9 x 11 in.

FEATURED ARTWORK

Lisa Kokin, *Forget the Story*, 2004.

Millinery form, buttons, thread, wood, casters, rope, 14
x 8.5 x 40 in.





FEATURED ARTWORK

Detail View

Lisa Kokin, *Forget the Story*, 2004.

Millinery form, buttons, thread, wood, casters, rope, 14
x 8.5 x 40 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Lisa Kokin, Rescue 2004.

Buttons, chicken wire, imitation sinew, spray paint, 15.5
x 9.5 x 9 in.

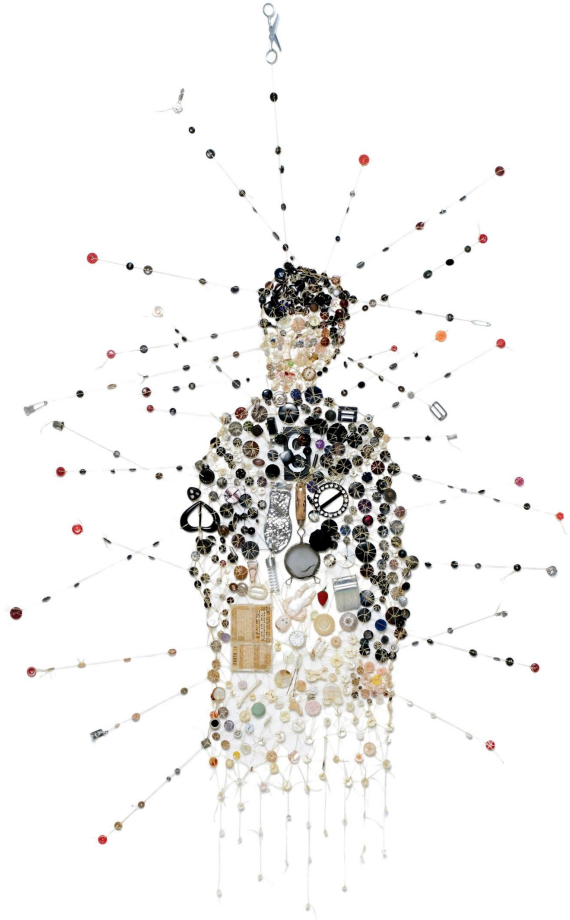


FEATURED ARTWORK

Detail View

Lisa Kokin, *Rescue* 2004.

Buttons, chicken wire, imitation sinew, spray paint, 15.5 x 9.5 x 9 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Lisa Kokin, Piecework, 2005.

Mixed media buttons, found objects, imitation sinew,
72.5 x 45 x 1 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Detail View

Lisa Kokin, *Piecework*, 2005.

Mixed media buttons, found objects, imitation sinew,
72.5 x 45 x 1 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Lisa Kokin, Party Hat Diabolique, 2004.

Buttons, found objects, imitation sinew, chicken wire,
55.5 x 27 x 1 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Amalia K. Amaki, *Latch Key*, 2014.

Button-based mixed media, 30 x 24 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Beau McCall,
darkmuskoilegyptiancrystals&floridawater/
redpotionno.1, 2014.

Buttons, fabric, thread, cast iron tub, 53 x 17 x 23 x 17
inches.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Detail View

Beau McCall,
darkmuskoilegyptiancrystals&floridawater/
redpotionno.1, 2014.

Buttons, fabric, thread, cast iron tub, 53 x 17 x 23 x 17
inches.

FEATURED ARTWORK

Beau McCall, A Harlem Hangover: Tiiipssssyyy, 2012.

Wine bottle, buttons, metallic thread, denim, felt,
Wine bottle: 14 x 12 in. The Spill: 144 in.





FEATURED ARTWORK

Beau McCall, Domino Kool (Hood Classic I), 2013.

Buttons, plexiglass, embroidery thread, plastic jar, wood shelf, doilies, 25 x 25 in. Pour: 51 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Beau McCall, Domino Kool (Hood Classic I), 2013.

Buttons, plexiglass, embroidery thread, plastic jar,
wood shelf, doilies, 25 x 25 in. Pour: 51 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Beau McCall, *World Spinnin' on a 45*, 2015.

Buttons, Plexiglas, embroidery thread, and fabric, 36 x 36 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Detail View

Beau McCall, *World Spinnin' on a 45*, 2015.

Buttons, Plexiglas, embroidery thread, and fabric, 36 x
36 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Beau McCall, ABCDEFU, 2016.

Buttons, fabric, thread, chair, rulers, yardsticks.
Chair: 34 x 22.5 x 24 in., Crosshair: 72 x 72 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Detail

Beau McCall, ABCDEFU, 2016.

Buttons, fabric, thread, chair, rulers, yardsticks.
Chair: 34 x 22.5 x 24 in., Crosshair: 72 x 72 in.



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FEATURED ARTWORK

Beau McCall, *Hot Fun in the Summatime I*, 2015.

Buttons, denim shorts, embroidery thread, 20 x 25.5 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Beau McCall, *Hot Fun in the Summatime II*, 2015.

Buttons, denim shorts, embroidery thread, 20 x 25.5 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, Buttons UP (Souleo) Harlem,
NYC, 2014.

Kodak Metallic Chromogenic Print, 20 x 24 in. (Framed)



FEATURED ARTWORK

Petros Chrisostomou, *Untitled (Buttons)*, 2010.

Framed color photograph, 11 × 14 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Io Palmer, *Buttoned Up Cloud*, 2015.

Painted wood, fabric, found buttons, 50 x 27 x 15 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Detail View

Io Palmer, *Buttoned Up Cloud*, 2015.

Painted wood, fabric, found buttons, 50 x 27 x 15 in.



FEATURED ARTWORK

Hannah Battershell, *Country Walk*, 2014.

Mixed media on found button, 7 x 7 in. (Framed)



FEATURED ARTWORK

Hannah Battershell, Emma, 2014.

Mixed media on found button, 7 x 7 in. (Framed)



FEATURED ARTWORK

Hannah Battershell, Red Riding Hood, 2013.

Mixed media on found button, 7 x 7 in. (Framed)



FEATURED ARTWORK

Hannah Battershell, Explorer, 2013.

Mixed media on found button, 7 x 7 in. (Framed)



FEATURED ARTWORK

Hannah Battershell, Landlord, 2014.

Mixed media on found button, 7 x 7 in. (Framed)



FEATURED ARTWORK

Hannah Battershell, Lost Girl, 2014.

Mixed media on found button, 7 x 7 in. (Framed)



FEATURED ARTWORK

Camilla Taylor, *They've already left*, 2011.

Plastisol screen print on fabric, ephemera, welded steel, 5' by variable (3 units).



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FEATURED ARTWORK

André St. Clair & Tavet Gillson of ANDRÉTAVET in collaboration with Alexis Garrett Stodghill, Button Reign, 2016.

Digital photo collage, 24 in. diameter (each).



FEATURED ARTWORK

André St. Clair & Tavet Gillson of ANDRÉTAVET in collaboration with Alexis Garrett Stodghill, Button Reign, 2016.

Digital photo collage, 24 in. diameter (each).

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Amalia K. Amaki

Latch Key is informed by numerous issues that relate to childhood experiences and processes of socialization. It alludes to the reality that assimilation, bonding, appropriation and other interactive foundations are established during innocence - when we seem to be unaware of the "adult/deep" implications of life. The piece is about inclusion and exclusion and the associative roles of social and physical proximity to cultural and individual identity. Buttons contribute to notions of simplicity and common life while also providing surface properties that reflect the complexities of family and youth. Buttons are playful materials that have been primary or important components in my work for more than twenty years, with *Latch Key* joining the variations of fans, candy boxes, table sweets, quilts, and wall constructions conceptualized around assumption, desire, and survival.

Bio

Amalia Amaki was born Linda Faye Peeks on July 8, 1949 in Atlanta, Georgia. Her work redefines the lives of past and present African-American heroines and heroes and contrasts their depiction in the mainstream media. Her solo works, *Amalia Amaki: Boxes, Buttons and Blues* have also been on exhibition at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Beau McCall

Hot Fun in the Summatime I and II is a wearable art ode to short-shorts found everywhere from block parties to beaches around the world.

ABCDEFU is informed by my experience in Catholic School. The crosshair represents being a target of physical abuse by nuns. The school chair is my site of pain, reflection, healing and holy revenge.

A Harlem Hangover: Tiiipsssyy is inspired by late-night parties from the Harlem Renaissance era to current times when the hips get to moving and thrusting and bottles go tumbling over.

Domino Kool (Hood Classic I) recalls my upbringing in the "hood" when Kool-Aid was a popular drink. I represent the duality of this drink that simultaneously recalls the joys of youth while being a sugary unhealthy choice of beverage. As an adult the taste is now bitter but the memories evoked by this drink will always be sweet.

We The People, takes its name from a 1972 song by The Staple Singers. The socially conscious anthem arrived during the Vietnam War, Watergate, the Black Power Movement, and the early days of disco. Thus, here is the world—in all of its chaos and beauty—spinning on a 45-rpm record insert.

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Beau McCall

darkmuskoilegyptiancrystals&floridawater/redpotionno.1, is inspired by the poem "one" from Ntozake Shange's choreopoem, *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf*. I depict the climax of the poem when lady in red, after giving herself to a lover, prepares a bath to wash away his scent. Thereby, the bathtub becomes a spiritual and ritualistic sanctuary and site of one's search for inner peace and self-love.

Bio

As a creative artist, Beau McCall creates work combining various materials such as mother of pearl, wool and decorative buttons. In the late 1980s and early 1990s McCall became an established force within the Black Fashion Museum collective and was featured in the fashion bible, *Women's Wear Daily* and on *PBS*. Since then McCall has begun to focus solely on creating visual art. McCall was recently selected as one of NBC's TheGrio.com "40 Amazing Black Artists to Watch in 2014." His work is part of the permanent collection of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, NY.

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Camilla Taylor

I wanted to make a piece that didn't have a face at all, but still was able to garner someone's empathy and reaction. These figures have no heads, and don't look human, but I feel protective towards them. The holes in them, I call them wounds, make them vulnerable, offer the viewer a look into their inner life. I think of them as having come a long distance undergone something terrible to arrive where they are, and now they have the scars from that journey.

Bio

I was born in California, but grew up in the conservative Mormon town of Provo, UT. As soon as I could, I moved to what I thought of as the "big city," Salt Lake, and left the church I was raised in. In that den of iniquity, I attended the University of Utah and received my BFA.

I received my MFA with an emphasis in printmaking from California State University at Long Beach in 2011, (on the dean's list with Phi Kappa Phi Honors Society membership). I'm a founding member of C. Feign Jr. Gallery, an artist collective.

For more information: camilla-taylor.com

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Hannah Battershell

My work is always small in scale and often incorporates items that might be seen as everyday or even throwaway. I am fascinated by the alluring 'lostness' of found objects. In this series of works the holes of buttons become ghostly eyes staring out of tiny portraits, a small, forgotten thing becoming a window into, if you look close enough, a story in miniature.

Bio

Hannah Battershell is a London based artist whose work is known for its small scale and its 'playfully dark' tone. Often reminiscent of old children's book illustrations in their blend of humour, surreality and melancholy, her pieces range from miniature paintings on buttons to tiny paper collages framed in vintage tins.

Her work has been displayed in various exhibitions in the UK including the *Royal Academy Summer Exhibition* in 2011, 2013 and 2014 and at various solo shows with *The Curwen Gallery* in Bloomsbury, London. Her painting 'Crocodilian' featured in *Images 36* (Association of Illustrators' Best of New British Illustration).

For more information: hannahbattershell.com

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Io Palmer

Buttoned Up Cloud represents the 2300-mile journey between my small, rural hometown in eastern Washington to an equally small suburb in western Pennsylvania. To document my travels- I chose the lowly and humble white plastic button and paired it with the ephemeral ever-changing cloud image. Stopping in small town thrift stores and antique shops along the way, the white button became the dot that traced this voyage. As it suggested a tidy order to things- a way to find closure and significance. The cloud form however, reveals the opposite- as they were the constant shape during my journey but remained floating and intangible.

Bio

Io Palmer has been featured in several national and international exhibitions including Dakart-International Arts Biennial, Dakar, Senegal; and solo exhibitions at Deluge Contemporary, Victoria, BC; and The Art Gym at Marylhurst University, Oregon. She has participated in several artist residencies including the Sanskriti Foundation, New Delhi, India; the Santa Fe Art Institute, Santa Fe, NM; and the Art Channel, Beijing, China.

She holds a BFA from the Tyler School of Art (Temple University) and an MFA from the University of Arizona, Io is currently associate professor of fine arts at Washington State University, Pullman, WA.

For more information: iopalmer.com

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Lisa Kokin

Buttons have made cameo appearances in much of my work over the years, but never were they the primary material until a few years after my father's death in 2001 when I pulled out my collection and made a small portrait of my dad. This, as in much of my work, was a spontaneous and unpremeditated act, a confluence of material and subject.

My parents were upholsterers and my earliest memories are of playing in their shop with piles of vinyl and foam rubber. I have sewn since I was a child and the stitch plays a major role in my work, so it was natural to join the buttons together to form a reconstructed family portrait. What began as a memorial to my father soon expanded to the realm of family portraits, past and present, human and canine, and to the broader human community as I completed a three-part commission for a juvenile justice center comprised of button portraits of Rosa Parks, Cesar Chavez and Fred Korematsu.

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Lisa Kokin

Piecework was made in homage to my maternal grandmother who worked in a tie factory in New York as a young immigrant from Romania. *Ancestor* and *Sleep* both refer to my father in a more abstract way than the two-dimensional portraits that I made early on in the series. I made *Rescue* when I adopted my first dog, Chico. Although it's generally thought that the human rescues the animal, in this case it was a sort of mutual rescue in that I gave Chico his forever home and he rescued me from the loneliness and grief that I felt after the passing of my father. *Party Hat Diabolique* uses as its source material a photo of my fifth birthday party in which I am looking at the camera with a characteristic melancholy look, wearing a cone-shaped party hat slightly askew. *Forget the Story* refers to a Buddhist phrase, which warns of the dangers of constructing narratives based on projection and speculation.

Bio

Lisa Kokin received her BFA and MFA from the California College of the Arts in Oakland, CA. The recipient of numerous awards and grants, Kokin was most recently given the Purchase Award from the Richmond Civic Center Public Art Interior Acquisitions Project in Richmond, CA. The artist teaches a variety of classes and workshops. She currently lives and works in El Sobrante, California, outside of San Francisco.

For more information: lisakokin.com

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Petros Chrisostomou

Petros Chrisostomou constructs both hybrid spaces and large-scale sculptures, combining the concerns of artist, sculptor and curator. His work, as much sculptural as photographic, draws inspiration from concepts of hyperreality. These works not only revel in signs and symbols – the simulacra of contemporary life, they transcend the postmodernist trope of the simulacrum, offering distinct traces of skewed realities of the Dadaists or fantasies of the Surrealists. His work questions how we interpret the world around us using a range of incongruous visual clues, obscure constellations of objects and spaces, with symbolically rich contexts. At the same time, the relations between the real and the imaginary in his oeuvre are a commentary on the mediated images of contemporary mass media that distort the natural and immediate dimension of our relation to reality, determining, among other things, the conditions for viewing and receiving art.

Bio

Petros Chrisostomou was born in London, 1981. He lives and works in New York. He was a resident on the International Studio and Curatorial Program, New York, as well as the winner of The Red Mansion Art Prize, where he worked for a concentrated period of time in Beijing, China. His work has been included in public and private collections worldwide.

For more information: petrosc.com

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Ruben Natal-San Miguel

I have always been drawn to uniqueness, attention to detail, texture, patterns, bright colors, great design and self-expression. When I saw Souleo in these wearable art button shorts, created by Beau McCall, my eye went right to them and wanted to capture such a sense of unique style. I always photograph what makes an instant impression on me. The rest of the ensemble was fantastic but the button-embellished shorts were what gave me an instant jolt and sense of remembrance. The shorts reminded me of the late great fashion designer, Patrick Kelly, who also worked with buttons. Plus the shorts reminded me that a cut off pair of jeans could be transformed into a great piece of wearable art.

In this era of aggressive gentrification when everything rich and colorful that represents a strong part of street culture is vanishing by the minute, it is important to acknowledge and celebrate the subjects and events that still have the resilience and spirit to keep marching on. This portrait photograph does just that.

Bio

Ruben Natal-San Miguel is an architect, photographer, curator, writer, art collector and consultant specializing primarily in the art of fine emerging photography. His work has been shown nationally and internationally. His photography and curated shows have been published in several publications including The New York Times, New York Magazine, and The Atlantic.

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

ANDRÉTAVET

Alexis Garrett Stodghill joins André St. Clair and Tavet Gillson of ANDRÉTAVET, whose work explores self-image filtered through the dreamlike prism of technology.

In *Button Reign*, the central character of the button "queen" illustrates the universal tension between the public and private self. The theme of the "button" unifies the piece, functioning both as a strong visual element and as a metaphor for notions of closure and confinement, suturing and covering up.

In the first image the queen is shown in her formal court portrait. She is "buttoned-up" -- constrained in a heteronormative power role, her transgender identity almost subsumed.

In the second portrait the queen is "unbuttoned" -- vulnerable, relaxing in her tub, taking pleasure in her feminine nature, free from society's constraints.

The buttons in the first image function as armor -- a visual cue to royalty, power and order. In the second image the buttons form a multicolored, polymorphous dream-substance that caresses the queen as she experiences her true self.

Our work concerns the universal experience of having both a "buttoned-up" social self we all must present, and a gender-personal self we all possess outside society's prescriptions.

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

ANDRÉTAVET

On an artistic level, our work combines subversive content with a pop visual style that seduces and provokes viewers into going deeper -- into our work, into our culture, into themselves.

The aesthetic of *Button Reign* is in part inspired by the dynamic designs of famed interior designer Jamie Drake, who lent key spaces in his Manhattan home for our photo shoot, which plays upon the mix of darkness, elegance, and pop/edgy romance that the designer has described as key elements of his abode.

Bio

One name; Two artists.

Together, André & Tavet explore self-image filtered through the dreamlike prism of technology.

ANDRÉTAVET's visual art is part of the permanent exhibit at Cyndi Lauper's True Colors Residence for LGBT youth and in the permanent collection at Leslie Lohman Museum of Art.

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Bio

André St. Clair is a transgender interdisciplinary artist, speaker and activist. St. Clair holds an Honors B.A. in Sexuality and Society from Brown University, an MA and MFA, respectively in Performance Studies from New York University/Tisch School of the Arts and in Acting from California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). With gender and sexuality framing her interests, her work promotes cultural and aesthetic diversity of viewpoints, experience and expression for the realization of equality. St. Clair is on the Board of Directors at Leslie Lohman Museum of Art.

For more information: andrestclair.com

Tavet Gillson is an artist and entertainer born and raised in New York City. His work encompasses a variety of media -- comics, photo-collage, graphic art, animation, painting, drawing -- and ranges from the atmospheric to the absurd.

For more information: tavetgillson.com

ARTIST STATEMENTS & BIOS

Bio

Alexis Garrett Stodghill is an artist, multimedia journalist, and new media producer. She graduated from Brown University with a double major in Modern Culture and Media and English and American Literature. Through the mix of these disciplines, she explores the way different media can empower subjects, or subjugate them to dominant powers with greater access to the means of visual production. In her business endeavours, she has created media that gives voice to individuals typically disenfranchised in this economy through projects such as co-producing the groundbreaking web site BlackPlanet.com. She has also written for various outlets, including NBCNews.com, New York's Daily News, Ebony, Jet, and BlackEnterprise.com. Ms. Stodghill currently produces news at MSNBC, and lives in New York City.

For more information: alexisgstodghill.com

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Buttons as contemporary art, reimaged in NYC exhibition

By Ula Illytzyk Jan. 22, 2016 6:43 AM EST



15 photos



Visual artist Beau McCall stands next to a vintage all-in-one desk he illustrated with buttons, as... [Read more](#)



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Wires Home

Buttons as contemporary art, reimaged in NYC exhibition

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

PUBLISHED: 07:44 EST, 22 January 2016 | UPDATED: 07:45 EST, 22 January 2016



NEW YORK (AP) — There's no denying buttons are an important clothing item, but can they rise to the level of art? A new exhibition at a Manhattan gallery proves they can.

In the hands of 11 artists, the everyday, mundane objects are used to create sculptures, portraits and amazing wearable art — some political, personal or whimsical.

Each artist is "pushing buttons" beyond their normal use and reimagines and repurposes them as an artistic medium in contemporary art, said Peter "Souleo" Wright, curator of "The Button Show" at Rush Arts Gallery in Chelsea.



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Buttons as Contemporary Art, Reimagined in NYC Exhibition

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS JAN. 22, 2016, 7:39 A.M. E.S.T.

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NEW YORK — There's no denying buttons are an important clothing item, but can they rise to the level of art? A new exhibition at a Manhattan gallery proves they can.

In the hands of 11 artists, the everyday, mundane objects are used to create sculptures, portraits and amazing wearable art — some political, personal or whimsical.

Each artist is "pushing buttons" beyond their normal use and reimagines and repurposes them as an artistic medium in contemporary art, said Peter "Souleo" Wright, curator of "The Button Show" at Rush Arts Gallery in Chelsea.

"What I tried to do with this show was look at artists who were elevating that level of craft and making polished, well-executed works that can stand next to a painting ... because of the amount of detail and precision in the work," added the curator.

In "A Harlem Hangover," Beau McCall simulates a spilled wine bottle. It lies on its side on a high pedestal and a long ribbon of buttons cascades into a pool of ruby red buttons on the floor.

Los Angeles Times

Buttons as contemporary art, reimagined in NYC exhibition

By E.L.A. BENTLEY

There's no denying buttons are an important clothing item, but can they rise to the level of art? A new exhibition at a Manhattan gallery proves they can.

In the hands of 11 artists, the everyday, mundane objects are used to create sculptures, portraits and amazing wearable art — some political, personal or whimsical.

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NYC Exhibit: Buttons as Art



VIDEO



VIDEO



The Button Show

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Curated by Souleo

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