

ARTFORUM

“K.r.m. Mooney: Bad Reputation,” by Catherine Taft, May 2015



View of “K.r.m. Mooney,” 2014–15. Background: *Joan Green, Bimetal I*, 2014.
Foreground, from left: *Bimetal, Plurals*, 2014; *Joan Green, Bimetal II*, 2014.

Bad Reputation is a small, artist-run project space located in an anonymous prewar office building in Los Angeles’s Westlake neighborhood. Run by artist Andreas Waris, Bad Reputation takes its name from the title of Penny Arcade’s book on performance art, allegedly written in a seventh-floor office within the same building (where Arcade’s publisher Semiotext[e] also rented its offices and provided studios to writers). This past January, the gallery was supplanted by the Cologne Room, another off-space run by Waris, who conceived of the gallery-within-a-gallery as a tribute to 1980s Cologne—this time, his strategic titling was meant to evoke whiffs of the German city’s cosmopolitan cultural milieu. As a single site, Bad Reputation and the Cologne Room formed a hybrid exhibition space predicated on superimposition: Halfway through the three-month run of K.r.m. Mooney’s solo exhibition at Bad Reputation, Susanne M. Winterling’s work (and the Cologne Room conceit) was injected into the installation, where it stayed, parasite-like, for the remainder of the show. Encountering Winterling by way of Mooney—or vice versa—required a fair amount of sifting through the layers of Waris’s interventions. Nevertheless, Mooney’s work (itself unfettered by effusive homage) offered strong formal assertions in its own right.

The spare exhibition comprised three simple sculptures arranged on the ground: *Bimetal, Plurals* (all works 2014), a small organic-looking assemblage of silver-plated cast plants, and *Joan Green, Bimetal I* and *Joan Green, Bimetal II*, two baton-like, multipart contraptions. The batons were each composed of plastic product parts—aquarium-heater elements, fluorescent lights, tubes, clamps, plugs, joints, and straps—that were plated with metals, including copper, nickel, and silver, and garnished with a single lavender stem cast in bimetals whose oxidized surface had it a taupe patina. Recalling weaponry, prostheses, and household appliances at once, the objects seemed simultaneously divorced from function and begging for activation. *Bimetal, Plurals*, on the other hand, modestly referenced actual flora, though its recognizable cast plant forms—lavender and foxtail—appeared to be drained of color and frozen in time. As objects and material explorations, the sculptures bear something of the understated radicalism of early Richard Tuttle, but instead of stripping 1960s Minimalist formalism to its conceptual

ALTMAN SIEGEL

1150 25TH ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

tel: 415.576.9300 / fax: 415.373.4471

www.altmansiegel.com

underpinnings, Mooney offered odd, abstract assemblages whose parts were stripped from postindustrial products. When Winterling's three works entered the space at the end of January, *Joan Green*, *Bimetal 1* and *Bimetal, Plurals* remained on view, engendering a dialogue around presence and absence.

On an adjacent wall, looming over the sculptures, Winterling's *Streetbodies*, 2015—a fourteen-foot span of mirrorlike black acrylic paneling, the length of which the artist scratched with a diamond ring—reflected the surrounding space, casting back views of the LA cityscape visible from the gallery's three walls of windows. A semiabstract photocollage and a deep-blue C-print echoed the work's formal qualities of reflection and flatness, and monochromaticity. Like the cold, flat surfaces of iPads, the material quality of Winterling's works spoke to the technological ambiguity of Mooney's sculptures. Yet, as exemplified by this two-person show, the relationship between the two artists ultimately felt unresolved. As a curatorial strategy, the logic of the Cologne Room became an imposition replete with superfluous historical and cultural references that detracted from the work itself. Mooney's sculpture would be better served by a space that allows for its own present tense.