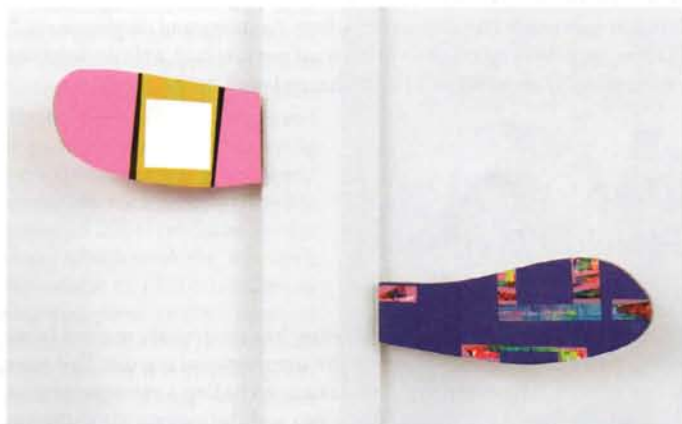


## Chuck Nanney

JENNY'S

The sculptures that constituted “BODY PARTS & ORACLES,” Chuck Nanney’s first solo exhibition in more than a decade, abide by a lurid color scheme of lime green, neon pink, scarlet, and cerulean, which cumulatively generated an electric lyricism. Most of the objects here on view, mounted to the gallery walls or resting on its floor, were constructed of unassuming materials—household hinges, wooden dowels, Plexiglas sheets, plywood bits—whose acrylic painted surfaces occasionally gleamed with gold, copper, or aluminum leaf. Several were marked with sigils, those mystical emblems constructed via a meditative distillation of a crafter’s written assertion into a merged abstract form and thought to manifest their maker’s stated desire. In the exhibition’s final weeks, Nanney added a freshly mixed ten-and-a-half-hour audio work, *untitled*, 2003–14, in which droning hypnotic flushes are overlaid with vintage-movie dialogue and sprawling, cacophonous disco.

These sculptures fit within a taxonomy informed by both bodily and mystical associations. The vibrant, fleshy phallic shapes Nanney describes as “linga” sported a shape and stature similar to the works



View of “Chuck Nanney,” 2014. From left: *mobile pink flipper cloud lingum*, 2014; *mobile purple flipper cloud lingum*, 2014.

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listed as “nubs,” but the artist’s nubs were decidedly more visually subdued, white or nearly black. The paddle-like *mobile pink flipper cloud lingum*, 2014, a plywood board painted pink and yellow on one side with a square of gold leaf, was screwed (by way of a brass hinge) to the supporting pillar from which it stood erect, its tip pointing leftward. On the board’s reverse face, a thin layer of vermilion paint cast a lively glow against the gallery’s white wall. A foot or so away on the other side of the pillar, *mobile purple flipper cloud lingum*, 2014, extended its paddle in the opposite direction. Meanwhile, in a corner of the gallery, two small plywood squares with intersecting abstract lines were mounted at right angles by L brackets in *mobile secret love spell corner*, 2014. The resultant enclosed square formed by the negative space between the panels was one of many cloistered sites within this modest new Los Angeles gallery and served as remainder and reminder of the artist’s magickal intentions. The works’ methodical positioning, repetitive shapes, and generally exuberant surfaces positioned Nanney somewhere between artist and diviner.

The artist’s drive to produce objects that are neither strictly wall-mounted nor stand-alone sculptures additionally aligned “Body Parts & Oracles” with El Lissitzky’s 1923 installation *Proun Room* (from which Nanney presumably took the titles of his two “proun” compositions here exhibited), and this recent exhibition similarly placed geometric sculptural forms in dialogue with their enclosing architectural space. Beyond strategic congruencies, Lissitzky and Nanney share a commitment to self-determination: the former with his likening of the artist’s brushwork to a “symbol of a new world” and the latter as a practitioner of sigil craft’s self-actualizing intentionality. But, in contrast to Lissitzky’s aesthetic precision, the Oakland, California-based artist veered away from material perfection. The brackets and hinges holding the plywood works to the gallery architecture were all visible. Uneven cuts delineated the curves of *stable nubs*, 2013, two fingerlike plywood pieces screwed to zinc brackets. *Mobile forgotten sigil*, 2014, took a similarly clumsy oblong shape. One work, a pink-painted wooden dowel (*pink corner composition proun*, 2014), rested on the gallery’s protruding electrical channel. Another thin pine beam, *composition support*, 2014, leaned against the wall as a small neon-orange “oracle” element balanced on its top. Together the works engendered an air of delicate dependency with respect to the objects’ relationships to one another and to their enclosing structure. This gave the room a feeling of vulnerability humming with metaphysical possibility.

Nanney’s concern for ritualistic repetition appeared at all levels of his project: in the droning beats of his sound work, the recurring shapes categorized by their titles, and, especially, the magickal processes by which his objects were generated. More than a decade ago in these pages, the writer Liz Kotz asked theorist Judith Butler, “How do you determine what constitutes *subversive* repetition?” Butler responded that subversion isn’t something precisely calculable or recognizable—but that subversive copying involves both “miming and displacement.” Nanney employs repetition in order to, if not displace, at least defer the registration of meaning in a room charged with desire.

—Nicolas Linnert