



January 15, 2014

## ‘Consumer Detritus’



Aicon Gallery is presenting *The Altar of Convenience*, an exhibition of new sculpture by Debanjan Roy. The exhibition, on view through February 1, 2014, is comprised of more than twenty masterfully hand-carved wooden sculptures of oversized everyday objects, all of which will inevitably find themselves consigned to the trash-heap of modern living. Alternately playfully irreverent and hauntingly solemn, these sculptures all ultimately speak to the ongoing social and ecological crises that continue to unfold not only in increasingly commodifying consumer societies such as India and China but on a global scale.

Debanjan Roy’s sculptural practice is first and foremost engaged in an ongoing process of articulating the changing social realities of day-to-day India. His previous cycle of works – the *India Shining* series – juxtaposed Gandhi as a central signifier of India’s modern history with incommensurably contemporary objects such as laptops and iPods to ask ‘how do we square India’s past with its present and future?’

In the current exhibition, Roy builds upon these themes by using the traditions and techniques of pre-industrial woodworking to create a host of meticulously hand-carved sculptures of modern-day consumer products and their detritus - bulging refuse bags and discarded water

bottles for example. The works raise questions not only about the ramifications of disappearing traditional craftsmanship and production at the local level but also about the environmental consequences, both regional and global, of the ever increasing mass-production of “easy-to-buy/easy-to-bin” products in societies with rampantly increasing consumer demands and little industry oversight.



Debanjan Roy, **Toothpaste and Toothbrush**, 2013, wood, 30 x 12 x 4 in. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and Aicon Gallery.

Aesthetically, Roy’s work has its origins firmly rooted in Pop Art, taking cues from Claes Oldenburg’s impossibly outsized soft-sculptures of 1950s American popular culture and Andy Warhol’s uncanny knack for elevating everyday consumer imagery to the realm of fine art and high commerce. Contemporaneously, the works call to mind British artist Gavin Turk’s life-sized crumpled garbage bags cast in bronze, with whom Roy shares a desire to unearth the monumental in the mundane. However where Turk associates his commercially produced sculpted refuse with the discarding of personal

histories, Roy's hand-made objects channel the casting-off of traditional means of production while acting simultaneously as literal representations and metaphorical vessels for the ecological consequences of hyper-consumerism and mass production in still-developing regions.

The exhibition's title, a shortened form of the phrase 'sacrificed on the altar of convenience', clearly encapsulates these themes but also conveys the sense of ironic reverence one feels when confronted with these lovingly crafted depictions of broken and abandoned products, here given a second life as objects of art. In this way, the exhibition not only warns of the potential social and environmental disasters looming on the horizon but, through the resurrection of refuse to the realm of human appreciation, hints at the hope that things need not end in crisis, if half as much care and ingenuity could be dedicated to the end of an object's existence as to its beginnings.

Debanjan Roy was born in 1975 and trained in Visual Arts at the Rabindra Bharti University, Santiniketan and subsequently at the same institution for his MA. He is part of a generation of artists that has witnessed India's transformation into a nascent global superpower and like many, is keen to interrogate this process. He has had solo exhibitions at Gandhara Gallery, Kolkata and Gallery Akar Prakar, Kolkata as well as Aicon Gallery, New York. Recent group shows have included Artifact at Gensler, San Francisco, Shapeshifters at Aicon Gallery, London and The Human Animal at Gallery Threshold, New Delhi. The artist lives and works in Kolkata, India. This is his second solo exhibition with Aicon Gallery, New York.