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Art in America



Stephen Lichy

at Foxy Production,
through Jun. 12

2 East Broadway, 200

If you don't remind yourself that the four objects (all 2016) in Stephen Lichy's second solo exhibition are the products of human labor and experience, they might seem otherworldly. The artist produced *Bowl*, a three-foot-diameter floor sculpture, in collaboration with an expert in *urushi*, an ancient Japanese lacquer. The perfection of the lacquer makes the giant bowl hard to look at. It dissolves, reflects, shimmers—always dodging the prosaic form suggested by the title. *Bell* is a bronze bell sans clapper that's been placed in a small niche in a wall near the gallery entrance. The checklist identifies the pile of dust inside the bell as *cremains*: the arrangement is an austere *vanitas*. Made of oiled walnut, *Screen* is an ambiguous piece of furniture that combines a room divider with a small bench. Its proportions are ideal and its craftsmanship is meticulous, but what is it? It slips between categories: custom seating, theatrical prop, Minimalist sculpture. The final piece in the exhibition—and "final" is appropriate because *Snake* is the climax and anticlimax to the show—features a huge stuffed python on the floor. Lichy placed one gold ring in the snake's fangs and another around its partly coiled body. It shatters the exhibition's solemn atmosphere with a dose of spectacle, even bathos. It also clarifies an underlying unity in Lichy's sculptures. Their symbolic aspects, including evocations of death and the occult, are intertwined with and amplified by the crafting of natural materials. —William S. Smith

Pictured: Stephen Lichy: *Snake*, 2016, taxidermy snake and bronze, 36 by 58 by 7½ inches. Courtesy Foxy Production, New York. Photo Mark Woods.