

ARTFORUM

Annette Messenger

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY | NEW YORK

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In the two standout, panoramic installations that make up her latest exhibition, Annette Messenger mines her four-decades-long concern with the psyche's lurid underbelly. United by their theatrical tenor and shared palette of black, biomorphic forms, these works implicate a body that is porous, fragmented, and riven by desire.

A Freudian mood—anxious, aggressive, redolent of childhood trauma—marks *Et range ta Chambre* (And tidy your bedroom), 2007–2009, previously installed in the fall of 2009 at Goodman's gallery in Paris. In the room's center, swollen, ovoid cones, sewn and stuffed in skins of black leatherette, hang from the ceiling in an antic, tactile array that recalls Eva Hesse's *Several*, 1965, and Louise Bourgeois's 1967 "Soft Landscapes" series. Various draped and wrapped in black netting, their fleshy, tumescent forms echo the adjacent floor-bound sculptures, which are encased in an identical monochrome imitation leather. In the corner, a distended Christ figure lies prostrate, its gender ambivalent, save for the scar stitched down its center that suggests evisceration. Nearby, black tubing runs low against the wall, forming the outline of a house and culminating in a domestic diorama, complete with a crib and sofa. Other elements summon childhood: a miniature Croc shoe suspended in a wire triangle, and a series of wall-bound ropes affixed with decorative pins like those a child might collect. Look closer, however, and the images on each pin prove more alien than familiar. Sketches of erect phalluses hang alongside black-and-white photographs of orifices—eyes, nostrils, and bared teeth—shot in close-up.

In an adjacent gallery, *Continents noirs* (Black Continents), 2012, features nineteen discrete sculptures, modeled in monochrome black and suspended from the ceiling. On each, hybrid, bestial figures coexist with abandoned urban architectures, implying a narrative of catastrophe and ruin. As in *Et range ta Chambre*, this constellation of forms sparks a chain of opaque, unsettled associations, making the work as much about the viewer's convoluted logics as the objects themselves.



Annette Messenger, *Et range ta chambre* (And tidy your bedroom) (detail), 2007–2009, mixed media, dimensions variable. Installation view.

— Courtney Fiske

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