

Henry GUNDERSON

The New York Times,
What to See in New York Galleries This Week

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Jan. 26, 2017

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Henry Gunderson's giant "Biosupport" sneaker painting, with worms for laces.
Credit: Henry Gunderson, MacGregor Harp

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Through Feb. 5. 247365, 57 Stanton Street, Manhattan; twentyfourseventhreesixtyfive.biz.

For some people, sneakers are the apex of human achievement. They are an art form, a utility and a window into the soul. Henry Gunderson mines this in "Shoes Etc.," his show at 247365, which even gives visitors a chance to donate footwear to a charity, Shoes For All, in Albertson, N.Y.

The main attraction, however, is the five remarkable paintings that serve as emblems ("ecologies," the news release calls them) of different contemporary identities. The eco-conscious "Biosupport" canvas (all works are from 2016) includes maps on the vamp and earthworms for shoelaces while "12 Step," for the sober crowd, has recovery slogans and adhesive bandages for fasteners. "Ambassador of Beyond" is a sneaker-sandal for the prophetic

posthuman, and “Le Modele Rouge” nods to purportedly progressive corporate culture — office supplies are attached to the tongue and heel and little tribal figures are painted on other parts of the shoe.

“Shoes Etc.” draws heavily from Pop Art and 1970s Photorealism, but is also reminiscent of Ashley Bickerton’s sculptures from the 1980s, which used product logos to define identity in an age of mass consumerism. Where Mr. Bickerton’s work functioned as postmodern self-portraits, however, Mr. Gunderson’s is a millennial study that takes collusion with capitalism to the next level. Sneaker companies are among the canniest of manufacturers, anticipating the needs, wants and desires of their consumers. The funny thing is, this kind of deep psychology around aesthetics used to be the province of art. In this sense, Mr. Gunderson’s paintings are clever, scary, funny and accurate.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER

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