

Don't rubbish this, it's art

Garbage can become art if it's put together in a provocative way, as this exhibition on litter shows

> art

APPETITES FOR LITTER –
8TH EMERGING ARTIST
SHOW 2006
Plastique Kinetic Worms
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IT IS one thing for artists to pass off self-indulgent creations as art and expect viewers not to deem it trash.

It is quite another delicious experience when artists take physical rubbish seriously, hoarding and transforming garbage with a tongue-in-cheek air, and spinning pure gold for gallery visitors.

Appetites For Litter features four Singapore-based artists, who just so happen to be women – and who have a tendency to retrieve junk.

Bombay-born Shubigi Rao calls what she does “pseudoscience”, in which she picks up rubbish found on East Coast beach and attempts to get some order out of them. Hence, in her installation, *The Study Of Leftovers, Revisited*, children's

crumbling slippers, plastic scoops and random toys are lined neatly on a shelf. Pieces of styrofoam – brown and mottled with age – are mounted on frames like geological specimens.

It is ultimately a futile effort, this act of sorting through the bits of flotsam and jetsam Rao uncovers. But it also questions the very practice of collecting and museum-building. By choosing some remnant or object to be preserved, one makes an arbitrary decision about what is important and what survives.

Sound as her theory is, her work is also immensely fun to look at. Piles of pseudo-theoretical paper are scattered on a table, where a book of Charles Darwin's writings is placed none too subtly. The stuff panders to the busybody in everyone. Our curiosity gets the better of us, and we are sucked into poking around at this elevated junk.

Meanwhile, Alexis Hy's installation, hyperbolically titled *ITADAKIMASU!!*



WHAT A FIND: It may look like a mess, but Jane Porter's *A Linty Find* is an intriguing work.

SPACE TOFU VROOM VROOM (Itadakimasu being Japanese for “dig in”), takes its cue from the post-modern junk of media messages.

The individual works include chopping boards painted with grotesque, pastel-coloured images of schoolgirls cut into pieces, toy figurines and a little booklet *S+E Vol 1* which contains more cutely gruesome tales.

Kitschy and detailed, Hy's creation apes its sources in popular culture so closely that any intended irony was lost on me. Similarly, Yeoh Wee Hwee's *Beetle In A Box*, which consists of cellulose tape shaped into organic, over-flowing tadpole-like bunches in a small room, seems decorative and limited in meaning.

More intriguing for this reviewer was Jane Porter's set-up. In *A Linty Find*, she has strewn together random objects, such as a box fan, suitcases and many little pieces of paper with obscure cartoons on them. The effect is one of surprise: Is this meant to be part of the artwork? Or the work of some careless workmen?

Step into a little alcove, and some handwritten instructions tell you to step in-

to the room, sit down and press the Play button on two DVD players simultaneously. You mince your way gingerly across an assortment of objects like drawers, tables, brochures and bug spray, and sit down to watch the video, *Anxious Shorts*. It is an interesting mish-mash of images, with trippy clay-mation figures and atmospheric shots of rainwater gushing out of a rusted pipe.

The effect is one of impressive, unschooled casualness. One is reminded of Xavier de Maistre's 1790 treatise *Voyage Around My Room*. Put under house arrest for 42 days, he proceeds to give an imaginative tour of his own four walls.

Therein lies the mouldy, lazy attractiveness of Porter's work: It is both a burning, unfulfilled desire to break free and roam, and a sad reminder that we are trapped by the material goods we acquire.

> Appetites For Litter is on till Saturday at Plastique Kinetic Worms, 61 Kerbau Road. Opening hours: 11am to 6pm. Curator and artists' talk on Sat, 2 to 4pm. Admission is free.

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