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EYE CANDY

OPTING FOR UNEXPECTED MATERIALS AND SURREAL SILHOUETTES, A LOS ANGELES ARTIST RESHAPES THE BOUNDARIES OF A DIVERSE CREATIVE PRACTICE.

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Los Angeles artist and designer Elyse Graham (opposite, top) demonstrates the process of crafting her playful vases by pouring liquid plaster into a balloon, which serves as a mold; a work in progress (below) rests on a table in the studio. Graham adds the finishing touches to a piece (left). Notes, sketches and fragments (opposite, bottom) fill a surface in the studio.



My background is in sculpture and my art-and-design practice has always been based on experimentation and play," says Los Angeles-based artist and designer Elyse Graham. Spurred by a desire to create more accessible work, Graham's portfolio has now expanded to include functional objects for the home. "I knew I didn't want to make pieces that would be sequestered to storage or shelved in my studio," she says.

Graham's wares are characterized by an evolving variation of off-kilter shapes in a spectrum of vibrating neon hues and saturated pastels, and her process is as playful as the many candy-colored shades. In her Drip series, for instance, Graham uses a balloon as a mold to manipulate plaster into an eggshell-thin, hollow form, and then fills that shape with resin allowing it to drip from the vase's opening. "I love working with materials in new ways," she explains. "I'd already been experimenting with balloons in my art practice, and the idea for the vases came as I challenged myself to

make a functional object using the techniques and materials I employ in my art making."

Until recently, Graham had produced her work in-house—her downtown Los Angeles studio includes a ventilated resin room—but lately, the artist has begun pushing her practice further, taking her existing forms to a foundry to create special edition cast-bronze pieces. "This process of experimentation, although often rife with failures, leads to my most interesting work," she notes. Her range of collections, now boasting a newly introduced group of pendants and sconces, intentionally remains in conversation with one another, by way of seductive materiality and imaginative silhouettes.

While conceptualizing her latest offering, affectionately nicknamed "the weirdos," Graham looked to principles of cellular biology, resulting in a whimsical assemblage of vibrantly colored pieces suited to the world of Dr. Seuss. "I hope to create objects that provoke thought and wonder," the artist muses. "I define my success by the curious look or amused smirk that comes across a person's face when they see a finished product." ■

"I CHALLENGED MYSELF TO MAKE A FUNCTIONAL OBJECT USING THE TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS I EMPLOY IN MY ART MAKING."