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# Ragen Moss at LAXART

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Text by Catherine Wagley

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Ragen Moss, *Opinion Basket No. 1* (2016). Polychromed plastic and wire basket. Images courtesy of the artist and LA><ART.

A student of mine recently commented on how strange

it is to think of a beautiful thing as a dangerous tool. We had just watched Pipilotti Rist's *Ever is Over All*, where Rist's blissed-out protagonist strikes car windows with a metal tulip—the flower both hammer and salve, making the smashing process gentler. Similarly, a friend who spent last autumn designing mystical tools during an artist residency in Sweden now says, sometimes, when someone faces a dilemma, “We should make a tool for that.”

Ragen Moss's show at LA<>ART, called *A Regular Shaped Tool*, plays into this art-as-tool, art-for-living conversation, which seems to be earnestly resurging in certain art world niches. Moss used polychrome plastic (a material with a thickness and clearness that resembles glass) to make a number of awkward, delicate objects that almost look functional. Their function though, rather than to accomplish a physical task, is to generate a subversively motivational energy that pervades the show. *Growing Tool* (2016), hangs on the wall; it is turd-like, brown-ish, and long, with a knob at the end. The objects in Moss's wire-mesh *Opinion Basket* (2016) contain similar shapes, but lean like canes or umbrellas, objects you might grab on your way out the door. Plastic sweatshirts dangle from the ceiling, sporting self-consciously radical slogans: “From Appearances You Look Incompetent Uncommitted Dangerous” is scrawled across one.

The idiosyncratic look of Moss's work conjures an earlier moment—Ree Morton's *Signs of Love* (1976) come to mind, as do some of Eva Hesse's more unwieldy objects. But the nostalgia doesn't detract. It's like Moss is harnessing the energy of an earlier, less professionalized moment in an effort to build momentum for something other artists (Jennifer Moon, Eliza Swann) are also trying to do right now: approach artworks as messy appendages or expansive help-mates for moving through their days.

Ragen Moss: *A Regular Shaped Tool* runs from February 20-March 26, 2016 at LA<>ART (7000 Santa Monica Boulevard, Hollywood, CA 90038).



Ragen Moss, *Rose* (2016).  
Polychromed plastic. Images  
courtesy of the artist and LA>  
<ART.



Ragen Moss, *Sweatshirt (bare chested)* (2016). Polychromed plastic. Image courtesy of the artist and LA><ART.