

MARTOS GALLERY

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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

MARTHA SCHWENDENER

CHINATOWN

Arthur Simms

Through Jan. 15. Martos Gallery, 41 Elizabeth Street, Manhattan. 212-560-0670;
martosgallery.com.



Installation view of Arthur Simms's "And I Say, Brother Had a Very Good Day, One Halo Friday." Arthur Simms and Martos Gallery

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A vast world of energies and ideas are packed into Arthur Simms's show "[And I Say, Brother Had a Very Good Day, One Halo](#)," which surveys more than 30 years of his work. References to his native Jamaica, the African diaspora and Aboriginal art are integrated here into sculptures that include glass bottles, human hair, toys, tools and knives. His technique of wrapping with rope is also uncannily similar to so-called folk and outsider artists like the [Philadelphia Wireman](#) or [Judith Scott](#), but it is self-consciously meticulous and masterly: Simms even embedded syllabuses from his university art courses in several works.

Some of the sculptures here look like fantastical weapons; others, supernatural vehicles of transport. Knives poke from the edges of "To Explain, Expound and Exhort, To See, Foresee and Prophecy, To the Few Who Could or Would Listen" (1995), while "Left Foot, Right Foot" (2007) is a pair of black roller skates with a halo of feathers. Skateboards, bicycles and tricycles also appear in several works.

If defense or flight seem highlighted in this show, so is the healing potential of sculpture, corresponding with current exhibitions of Milford Graves at Artists Space in Manhattan and Guadalupe Maravilla at the Museum of Modern Art. In Simms's work, carefully placed swatches of hair and nails driven into surfaces, as in the [Central African nkisi](#) (power figures), remind us that objects are not just aesthetic, but bearers of energy, and discarded objects collected and repurposed by artists just might serve ameliorative ends. *MARTHA SCHWENDENER*