

Create and destroy

Skyler Brickley portrays modern manufacturing methods as a double-edged sword – their immense possibilities and adverse impact on nature



Golden Rice, by Skyler Brickley



Pulled apart "The materials and process are an important part of my work", Brickley says

By JYOTI KALSI
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Skyler Brickley began his artistic journey as a figurative painter. But he felt the need to find another way to capture the changes taking place around him in an environment of economic recession, growing terrorism and evolving technologies. In his latest show, *Meltdown*, the New York-based American artist has used molten plastic to create abstract sculptures that quite literally and metaphorically represent the global financial and social meltdown.

"To reflect the present global situation and the way people are feeling today I wanted to create artworks that conveyed a sense of something being pulled apart. After experimenting with various materials I was able to create that effect with plastic or PETG (Polyethylene Terephthalate Glycol) of a certain thickness. I used a vacuum oven to melt sheets of clear plastic, and pulled and twisted the hot, molten mass to create these abstract shapes. The sculptures were then painted with automotive paints in an automotive workshop. The method, materials and

process I use are an important part of my work," Brickley says.

The industrial process and materials he uses celebrate the creative possibilities of modern manufacturing methods. But they also highlight the ever-increasing industrialisation and consumerism in society and its effect on the environment. Brickley's warped and contorted sculptures also allude to bombed buildings and mangled cars, pointing to the violence that continues more than a decade after 9/11. He often creates surface textures on the pieces or layers them with patterns and images to mimic the layering of Photoshop manipulations. Thus his sculptures are an abstract representation of the present social, political and economic environment as well as of technological innovation and the history of the digital revolution.

But while the artist comments on the world around him, he also looks inwards to reflect on his own journey. For instance, a diptych titled *Golden Rice* features a distorted red plastic sculpture placed next to a flat object, which, cut in the same shape and imprinted with an image of the sculpture, forms a self-referential mirror image.

The two pieces are framed within a perforated stainless steel panel.

The perforations are a reference to the Benday dot used for tonal shading in the classical printing process. The dots were a recurring motif in Brickley's early paintings and connect his plastic sculptures with his earlier work, while referencing the history of art and technology.

The dots also appear in another work, *Grey Goo*, where they are imprinted on to the plastic.

Looking like pixels they symbolise the shift from analogue to digital and look into the future at the possible consequences of new technologies. "Today when industrial processes are being replaced by digital technologies such as 3-D printers, I imagined a scary scenario where 3-D printers start printing themselves without control, creating endless replicas and using up all the world's resources," the artist says.

■ Jyoti Kalsi is an arts enthusiast based in Dubai.

■ *Meltdown* will run at Mottahedan Projects, Al Quoz, until December 20.



Grey Goo, by Skyler Brickley