

VENUS

MANHATTAN LOS ANGELES

Time Out, April 8, 2016.



"Fétiche"



Unlike the English word fetish, *fétiche* in French specifically means a charm embodying magical powers, a definition that serves as the jumping-off point for this disarming exhibit juxtaposing African and Oceanic ritual objects with works by modern and contemporary artists. While the former are indeed invested with supernatural qualities by their creators, the latter are better known these days for working their sorcery in the marketplace.

The allure of artifacts like a stately Vanuatu effigy or a Malian mask, as well as their pull on the Western imagination, is registered here by numerous 20th-century artworks, beholden to tribal aesthetics, by the likes of Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet and Francis Picabia. The debt carries over into this millennium in pieces such as Huma Bhabha's Easter Island head-slash-skull.

The show goes beyond evidence of direct borrowing to touch on the idea of artistic process as a form of ritual. It is less convincing, though, in also making the case that works by Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst and Richard Prince have a hold on anything besides collectors' wallets. They're proof that when it comes to making artistic magic, you either have it or you don't.

