

My name is Sandie Yi. I started making body adornments as an undergraduate art student about 10 years ago. I stumbled upon the making of wearable items by taking classes in metalworking and fiber and material studies. At first, I was very unaware of my relationship with my own disabled body. I simply used art to explore the interactions I had with other people, who have stared at, shocked at or screamed at my two fingers on each hand in public. Then, I developed a strong interest in the memories, histories and narratives generated within and performed by the body through everyday social interactions.

What I have here to share with you in the exhibition is a pair of hand made boots. The piece is titled as Dermis Leather Footwear. It was made in 2011. The materials that I used were latex, cork & thread.

Next to the boots, I have a digital print showing how my model, Sadie Wilcox, wears this pair of boots. The size of the photographic print is 20 by 30 inches.

Now, allow me to take you into the photograph that I am presenting in front of you. Imagine yourself sitting down across from Sadie, you look down and see her feet comfortably resting in a pair of skin-like boots. This pair of boots has openings for her toes and heels. You see Sadie's toes are painted with light pastel green nail polish. The boots have autumn colors; the surface has uneven color variations, mixing with yellow ochre and brown. The construction of the boots came from pieces of replicas of Sadie's skin.

I first used a casting process by applying a plastic based liquid mix onto Sadie's skin; within a few minutes, the opaque, glue-like liquid mix solidified but remained flexible for removal. The cast picked up the most intricate details of Sadie's skin, including pores and scars. I painted layers of liquid latex on the cast until the latex piece formed a desired thickness that I was looking for. I then use black polyester thread and sutured the pieces of latex skin casts together.

Just three inches below Sadie knees, the tops of the boots are made with thin layers of latex skin casts. They have the forms of flower petals, bursting and opening themselves up around the top of her calves. Now, if you use your fingertips and stroll on the boots, you can feel that some parts are thicker than the others, your fingertips may run into some bumps and possibly land on the stitches I made when sewing the skin casts together. Sadie's left boot is fully fastened with tiny black clasps. By unclasping and resting the boot on the floor, her right calf reveal herself from ankle and above. Look down farther on her feet, there are a few more openings on the surface of the boots. Most of the edges are embroidered with thread, continuing the suturing as a style. These openings engage the viewers to look, to look inside Sadie's boots—you see how her scars are the source of patterns for the design of the boots.

The process of making the boots resembled the skin graft surgical procedure that Sadie experienced. This pair of boots is a part of a collection of wearable works, exploring the impact of ethical and medical decisions made about the body; the boundary between ethics and aesthetics; the idea of the body in flux; and body ownership (reclaiming the body).

I am interested in exploring the potential of a new genre of wearable art—

Crip Couture. I am interested in engaging the complexity of disability as an aesthetic choice and creating meanings about bodies through making wearable art.