

VENUS

MANHATTAN LOS ANGELES

Binlot, Ann, "Touching the void: Daniel Colen tackles negative space in his latest show," *Wallpaper**, May 6, 2015.

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About three years ago, artist Dan Colen conceptualised a project that explored the transfer of energy through sculptures formed from guardrails mangled by violent road collisions. Colen and his team would comb highways, searching for and collecting material, until they started getting caught. Luckily, they were never arrested, but after a severe warning, Colen decided to go for a safer alternative and began visiting junkyards and recycling depots.

Then began a process of trial and error. 'I was trying to build the sculpture out of the actual objects, but because of how they were designed to absorb impact, they were really hard for me to manipulate as I had imagined,' says Colen. Instead, he started casting in different materials like plaster, rubber and plastic, before going on to metals like zinc and magnesium. 'Once I started pouring around [the sculpture] to make moulds, I just saw what was happening in the negative space and it just seemed more interesting to me,' he says.

Colen eventually decided on silver, because it's good at giving form to what he calls the 'redundant negative' - the negative spaces in the dented guardrails the sculptures are moulded from and, at a deeper level, the stories of the accidents that originally caused them (even though he knows nothing about the incidents). 'That negative space was created by this accident, which I'm almost assuming has this deathly quality to it, which is another negative. It's a kind of articulation of the loss of life in a loss of space,' says Colen. 'I wanted to fill all of that void.'

The resulting sculptures, titled 'Canopics', are on display until 27 June as part of 'Viscera', the inaugural exhibition at Venus Over Los Angeles. Colen also has two more bodies of work in the show - abstract 'Rainbow Paintings', based on stills from the Disney's *Fantasia*, which strip away any relation to the animated classic, and a sound piece consisting of psychic readings, where the listener can exist as both a voyeur and a participant in such an intimate meeting.

The exhibition may feel sparse inside the vast Boyle Heights space, but Colen insists that that's the whole point, as the space helps the search for the invisible forces of art. 'I'm challenging my works to interact with as much space as possible, to really become part of their environment and really have relationships with the air around them, to the architecture around them. In that way, I hope to touch a person more. Then you begin to understand that you're a part of this thing. You're not looking at it; you're inside it.'