

Artist Resources – Tom Sachs (American, b. 1966)



Sachs, 2016

“There was never a movement toward the real [in New York]. People didn’t go all the way. It’s too threatening to the art-world system to have art that works, because part of what makes it so strong is that it is insular,” Sachs told [BOMB Magazine](#), in 2013, in conjunction with an immersive installation at [New York’s Bothen Foundation](#). “You need to be a little provincial to keep your things tight. That’s partially why I’m not as interested in art as I am in media and technology.”

Sachs discussed his practice and the relationship between art and commerce, utility and materials, branding, fine art and objecthood, ritual, space travel, and authenticity at the [2014 New York Times International Luxury Conference](#). “Art is the least most valuable thing there is. And it’s not just because it’s the world’s largest unregulated commodities market, but because it’s the highest expression of our work and thus serves to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills. After we have secured our prosperity, we turn first to our interests, then our hobbies, and then when we’re lucky and we work hard, our work becomes art... through my work the objects I create become an authentic expression of my life.

“The studio is a sponsored team. I’m an athlete, and my sport is sculpture and putting up bathroom shelves,” Sachs told *GQ Magazine* in a [2019 interview](#) about the rituals of his creative practice, commercial collaboration, inspiration, and the importance of the studio.

“I realized quite quickly that my job as an artist is understanding and accepting myself so that I can have the courage to make just the right wrong decisions. So, I’m always looking into my past for that reason. I try not to measure success in any tangible way though. Art is art — good, bad, or indifferent.” Sachs explained in a [2016 interview](#) about his artistic goals, capitalism, and appropriation.

Sachs’ lifelong [fascination with space travel and science](#) has led to a close working partnership with NASA and two immersive installations in which Sachs and his studio team, in 2007, [recreated the 1969 moon landing](#), and a [voyage to Mars](#) in 2016. Every object in each installation was handmade, and each team member participated in a rigorous training and education to create a surreal experience in which art, science, fantasy, and reality were merged.

In a twist to his characteristic jabs at consumer culture, Sachs partnered with designers at Nike to build a show inspired by his Mars installation. The [NikeCraft Mars Yard shoe 2.0](#) launched in 2017 after five years of testing the use and experience of the raw materials chosen by Sachs, which include cork insoles, natural polyurethane midsole, untreated leather exterior, and Vectran (used in NASA spacesuits).

The [SCHAUWERK Sindelfingen](#) in Germany played host to Sachs’ first exhibition in Germany in 15 years. [Timeline](#) traces the quizzical artist’s prolific career through his most provocative creations, landmark installations, and new work.



Sachs in his SoHo studio, 2019
Photograph: Jason Nocito/*GQ Magazine*



Tom Sachs (American, b. 1966)

Bonsai, 2016

Cardboard, toothbrushes, cue-tips cast in bronze

Courtesy of John McEnroe; L2020:28.1

Earnest, provocative, and deeply committed to the creative process, Tom Sachs has forged a prolific and critically successful career by negating the traditional boundaries, definitions, and roles of artistic practice. Though a welder by training, Sachs embraces the aesthetic and functional possibilities of all materials. As a master of appropriation, he enjoys the conceptual hurdle of pairing high-end fashion or consumer brands (Chanel, Hermes, Nike) with jarring physical creations, such as a guillotine and a MacDonald's Happy Meal. Each piece contains a playful jab at the idealized notion that art and commerce are separate entities, and that perfection and authenticity should be the highest echelons of aspiration.

Bonsai originated as part of an immersive sculptural installation, *Tea Ceremony*, at The Noguchi Museum in 2016. Characteristic of Sachs, the tree plays with the concepts of luxury and utility, and reveals its raw construction and process. Branches made of cue-tips and toothbrush handles join a cardboard trunk, the whole consisting of over 3,000 individual pieces. Sachs revels in materiality and imperfections. Exposed hinges bring attention to the naked weld joints as the thin layer of cast bronze seems to highlight the original markings of the reused cardboard.

Extra Resources: [Sach's 2016 *Tea Ceremony* exhibition at the Noguchi Museum](#)

On view June 10 – September 13, 2020