

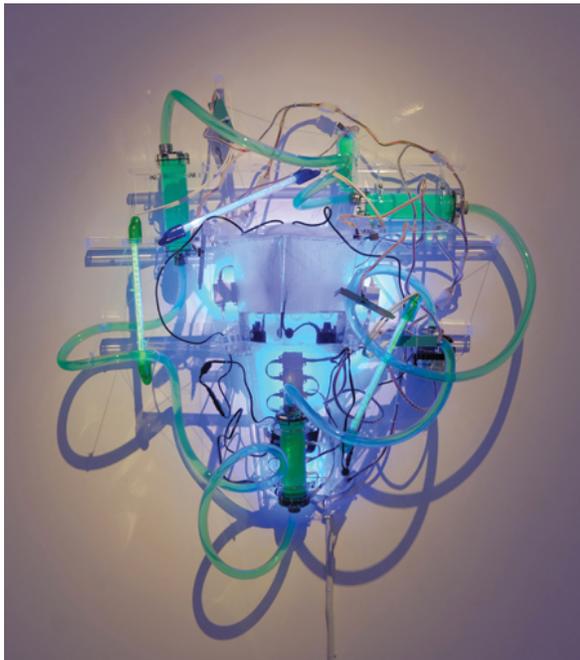
Adela Andea: "Mandragora: Liquescent Light" at Anya Tish Gallery

by

- Rachel Hooper

It's been three years since Adela Andea's previous solo exhibition at Anya Tish, and during that time, Andea has been very active, creating dozens of her luminous installations throughout Houston and Dallas. Previous site-specific artworks have had an all-over aesthetic, with neon tubes, plastic cords, and mechanical parts cascading down in such a way as to completely engulf viewers in their tangled lines and bright glow. By contrast, "Mandragora" consists mostly of smaller-scale sculptures, each with an iconic form and distinctive presence. It's as if the gallery were the artist's laboratory and each

work an experiment in the integration of robotics and an almost spiritual luminescence.



Techno-Alchemy Apparatus, 2013, Closed circuit water cooling system, water pump, Tygon tubing, UV dye, LED Illuminator, LED, ultrasonic fogger, cold cathode fluorescent lights, Plexiglas 42" x 38" x 12"

Techno-Alchemy Apparatus (works cited 2013) feels like a cyborg with green liquid pumping through its plastic tubes like radioactive blood. The components, which are typically used for computer cooling systems, have been repurposed to create a functional system that keeps the liquid moving as well as a balanced anthropomorphic design that resembles arteries and veins surrounding a beating heart. The small blue light bulbs, zip ties, and

winding cords of Liquescent Nebula look like growths encrusted on a mangled and twisted white neon tube, as if following their own organic logic. Another impressive work is Hybrid Automata, wherein fans and mirrored panels surround and reflect an intense central light. It's small size, only about a foot wide, but against expectation the artist instills its sharp edges and angular movements with a captivating cinematic quality.

Miraculously, Andea has imbued common consumer-grade electronics with a life of their own, and thus, "Mandragora" has clarified for me how the artist's installations work. Previously, I had assumed that their entrancing quality came from the theatrics of their bright colors and moving parts. Now I can see that they have an alchemy beyond drama. Plastics become skin, wires capillaries, and neon nerves. Her artworks attract us with their life force, like unknown species suddenly discovered. This biomechanical feat gives Andea's works a conceptual power that rivals their visual force. By compartmentalizing various elements of her practice, Mandragora thus shows the hybridization at work in many of her own artistic forms.