

ART

CHRIS ASTLEY'S "GROAN HALL"

By Mr. V

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The fashion industry is all too familiar with the idea of an It Bag, that perfectly chic container for all of one's possessions. And so is the artist Chris Astley, who last night opened his solo show "Groan Hall" at Art Production Fund's LAB in Soho last night. Astley had some specific requests when it came to finding his utopian version of carry all's: In his sculpture work, he creates oversized containers, preferring texture, strength and elasticity in his materials, and 90-degree corners and straight sides.



This newest piece, "Groan Hall", stretches 13-feet and is made of over 40 stressed bags piled one on top of the other. These forms are cast in concrete, and then have been painted with acrylic paint. He has been working with cast concrete for nearly a decade, and just started showing the works three years ago. Astley's work is about volume, shapes, lines and colors. It reminds me of the Flintstones, and the town of Bedrock. I imagine Fred and Barney slamming their car into the wall and groaning in unison. (Astley himself doesn't point out any cartoon references, but does list painters Windsor McCay and Phillip Guston as his inspirations.) "I think of my sculptures as drawings," Astley says. And while "Groan Hall" will be taken down on October 22nd, let's just hope he doesn't wait another decade to unveil his latest work.

"Groan Hall" opens at APF LAB on 15 Wooster Street from September 22-October 22.

