

Jon Duff, “Meeting Cup” (2015), polyurethane resin, acrylic, mug, and plywood, 18” x 12” x 6” (photo by Jillian Steinhauer for Hyperallergic)

## Jon Duff ([site](#))

When I first saw these works by Jon Duff, there was a part of me that really didn’t want to like them — they set off a hipster irony alert in some area of my brain. Yet I couldn’t resist being drawn in by the faux nature arrangements, the intricacies and drips and droops of the polyurethane plastic and resin. I haven’t figured out what meaning the cheeky mugs bring to the works, beyond providing a funny series of punch lines, but formally they make a nice counterpart to the fake nature: their pristine roundness offsets the spiky leaves and sticks, while their sheen mirrors that of the resin. My favorites are the ones in which the mugs are laid on their sides, the fake plants and goo seeming to spill out of them like so much cosmic throw-up. —*Jillian Steinhauer*



An informal roundtable held on Johnson Avenue by the members of The English Kills Project (photo by Hrag Vartanian for Hyperallergic)

## The English Kills Project ([site](#))

The parameters of art have greatly expanded in the last decade, so that projects like this “socially engaged, bio-art project in the English Kills tributary of Newtown Creek” felt very much at home during the 2015 Bushwick Open Studios. The project draws attention to the extensive waterway that is an integral part of the neighborhood, and highlights the current state of the creek, which is highly polluted and largely inaccessible to the public. The waterway has been consciously hidden and transformed through the years, leaving it all but invisible. The English Kills Project organized a few tables on Johnson Avenue beside the fenced-off parking lot that is the waterway’s man-made terminus. Joining the group for their discussion on the sidewalk immediately demonstrated how inhospitable the site has become. The noise of cars whizzing by on Johnson Avenue made conversation tough, we often had to be careful of the dust and dirt that was being kicked up by passing vehicles, and the impromptu picnic was enough to make you angry when you realized that a once bucolic setting was paved over and sectioned off for corporate use (currently Exxon-Mobil, Amaco, Getty Oil, Texaco, and other major companies have locations on the creek). The artists and activists who were there were interested in not only finding a way to raise awareness about the issue, but also finding ways to change their relationship with the environment through their art. In the midst of the studio-focused celebration, it was a nice reminder about the importance of public space. —*Hrag Vartanian*