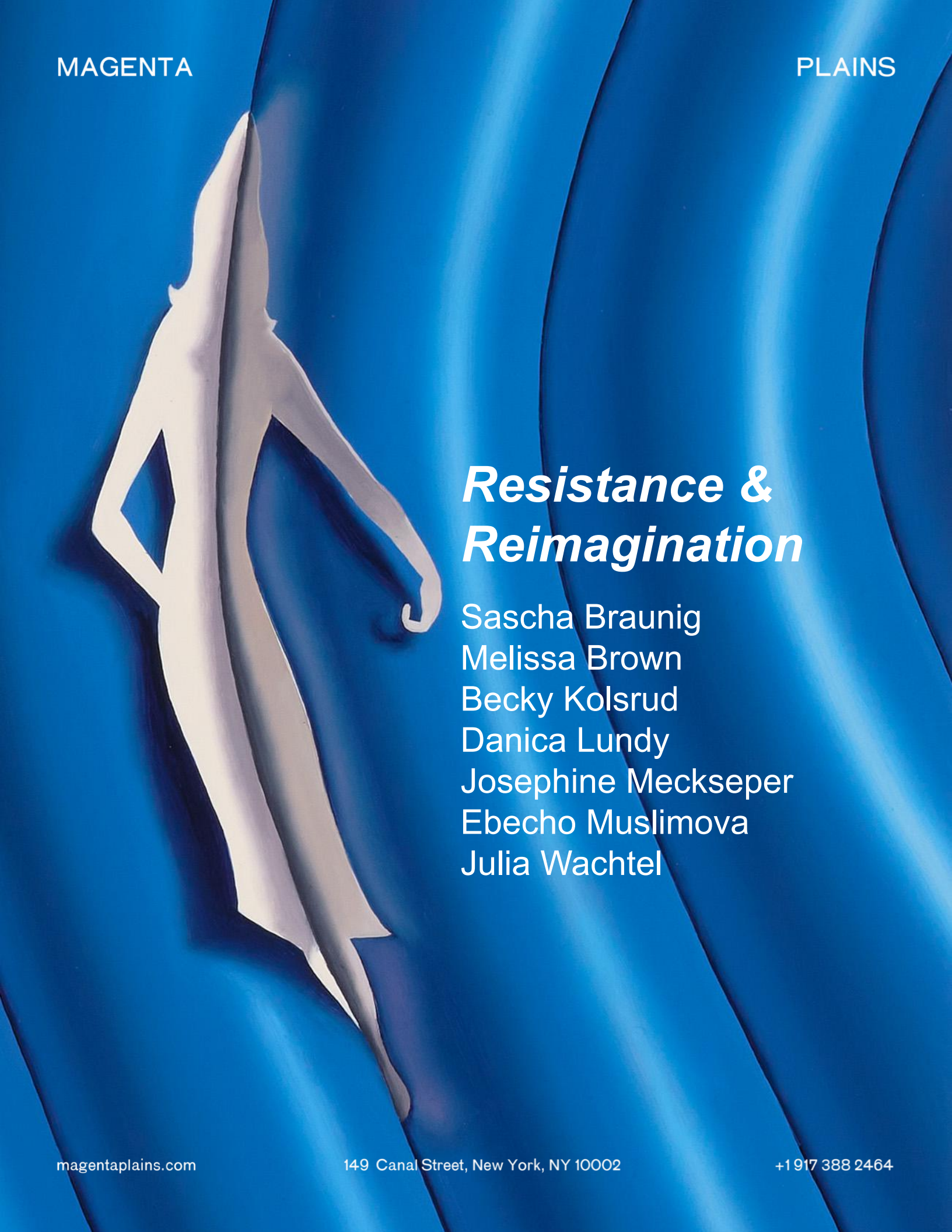

MAGENTA
PLAINS
Resistance &
Reimagination
Sascha Braunig
Melissa Brown
Becky Kolsrud
Danica Lundy
Josephine Meckseper
Ebecho Muslimova
Julia Wachtel
magentaplains.com
149 Canal Street, New York, NY 10002
+1 917 388 2464

Resistance & Reimagination

July 3–August 15, 2025

Level One
Magenta Plains
149 Canal Street, New York, NY

Opening Reception:
Thursday, July 3 from 6–8 PM

Press Release

Resistance & Reimagination brings together seven exceptional painters who understand the subtle, often invisible modes of resistance that reside within the structures of visual language, challenging us to reconsider the role of image-making—not only in political discourse but in everyday acts of self-expression. Through the work of Sascha Braunig, Melissa Brown, Becky Kolsrud, Danica Lundy, Josephine Meckseper, Ebecho Muslimova, and Julia Wachtel, this exhibition explores how contemporary painting, at times infused with the playful intensity of graphic and animated forms, becomes a tool for reflection and reinvention.

Conceptually central to this exhibition and its participants is the iconography of cartooning–a form of visual expression which has become all but anodyne–and its reclamation as a tool of subversion in the visual space. The principles of cartooning such as symbolism, exaggeration, and distortion are visible in the work of Sascha Braunig, Melissa Brown, Ebecho Muslimova, and Julia Wachtel. These artists address questions of shifting identity while questioning societal norms to expand the boundaries by which painting offers an insight into our world at large. Present in the work of Julia Wachtel is the language of consumer culture and a criticality of commercial display to expose the political and aesthetic systems that shape public consciousness. In the work of Josephine Meckseper are apparent reimagined historical undercurrents. Through her use of book pages, cut-out shapes, and window frames, she both engages with and subverts the discourse of the readymade and the collage, simultaneously exposing and encasing cultural signifiers and everyday objects.

In the exhibition, various methods of layering—including the physical process of printing and the use of the Ben-Day dot patterns—affect legibility, perhaps in reference to the dissolving of truth in media and a breakdown in sociological realities and shared culture. Through mirroring, silhouette, surreal environments, and repetition, the artists subvert traditional expectations of both painting and visual culture. Their work, however, does not rely on overt political messaging, but instead appropriates and reimagines these visual structures to question societal norms, reveal hidden tensions, and explore the fluidity of identity in a rapidly shifting cultural landscape. These forms are either exposed or obscured by complex compositions such as by the boundary of Becky Kolsrud's storefront security gate; at other points a window or a mirror focuses the viewer's gaze.

Fragments of the body and the absence of the body appear alongside recognizable tropes of the female form: a diamond ring on a manicured hand, disembodied legs with pointed toes in stocking tights, wigs on mannequin heads posed akin to busts from antiquity, and a slender spine draped in silken fabric. In some cases, the painter's focus is on a certain performance of gender, and the constraints that performance might create. In others, the focus is on the disruption of those boundaries. Consumer culture and the way these tropes are framed within it is often front and center in these works, but the focus remains on the bodies pictured and the way their agency is expressed and/or limited. The artists fracture and reframe the bodies they represent to assert their own agency and resist easy categorization of the feminine.

Entwining familiar visual modes with essences of the uncanny, the artists nudge the viewer to experience a distinct subject position through identification with the figures and characters in their images. While Julia Wachtel positions a wooden Uncle Sam (commonly known as a national personification of the United States) with a stock image of children experiencing their reflections stretched and illegible in a funhouse mirror, the figures in Danica Lundy's cashier transaction meld together in ways unpredictable and discomfiting. Utilizing these compositional tools, these artists are building on a figurative precedent which locates the body as a site of experimentation, and which can be used to negotiate power dynamics, personal agency, and collective identity.


MAGENTA
PLAINS
Sascha Braunig
magentaplains.com
149 Canal Street, New York, NY 10002
+1 917 388 2464

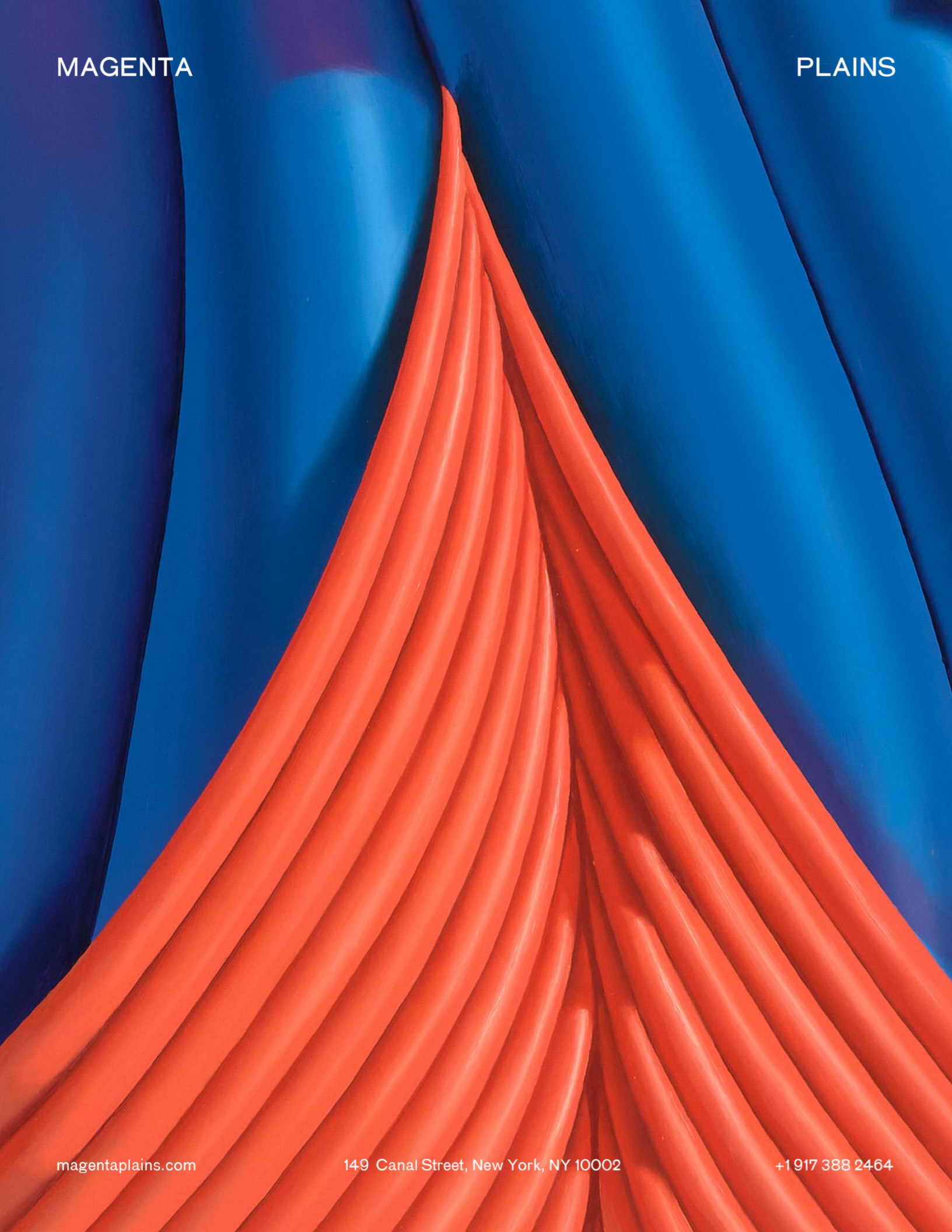
Artist Biography

Born 1983, Qualicum Beach, BC
Lives in South Portland, ME

Sascha Braunig devotes her critical focus to the capaciousness and limitations of the feminine form under duress. Braunig's figures teeter towards overextension—waists are pinched to extremity; appendages are restricted or decked in barbs; phantom silhouettes sinuously negotiate and adapt to the contours of their technicolor environments. Drawing on feminist artistic discourse, Braunig's imaginaries engage the ways that gender performance and systems of power are replicated. Training, fitting, and reinforcement are recurring motifs in the severe and sometimes sinister crucibles which Braunig's figures endure. Cast in vibrant complementary palettes and anchored through Braunig's graphic, tensile formal vocabulary, her images recapitulate and usurp foundational codes of gendered visuality to create surreal and unequivocally emblematic scenes.

She holds a BFA from The Cooper Union and an MFA in painting from Yale University. Braunig was awarded a residency from the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program in 2016, a Pollock-Krasner Foundation award in 2016, and a Macdowell Fellowship in 2013. Selected solo exhibitions include François Ghebaly, New York and Los Angeles, USA; Oakville Galleries, Ontario, Canada; Magenta Plains, New York, USA; Office Baroque, Brussels, Belgium; Atlanta Contemporary, Atlanta, USA; and MoMA PS1, New York, USA. Her work has been featured in institutional exhibitions including the Quebec City Biennial; Oakville Galleries, Ontario, Canada; Portland Museum of Art, Portland, USA; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Aïshti Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon; Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, Cleveland, USA; and the New Museum Triennial, New York, USA.

Sascha Braunig
Firebird, 2024
Oil on linen over panel
27 x 20 in.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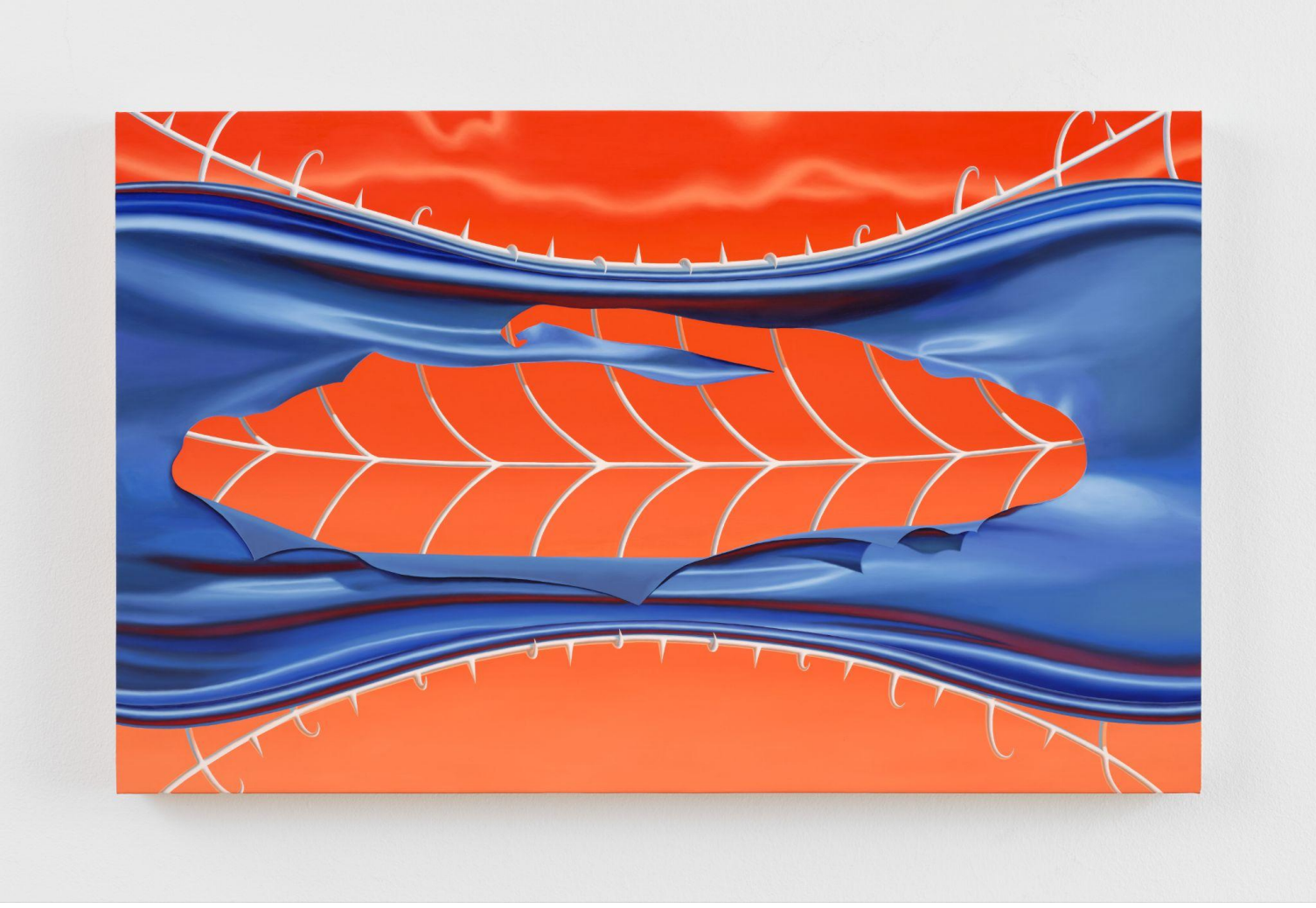
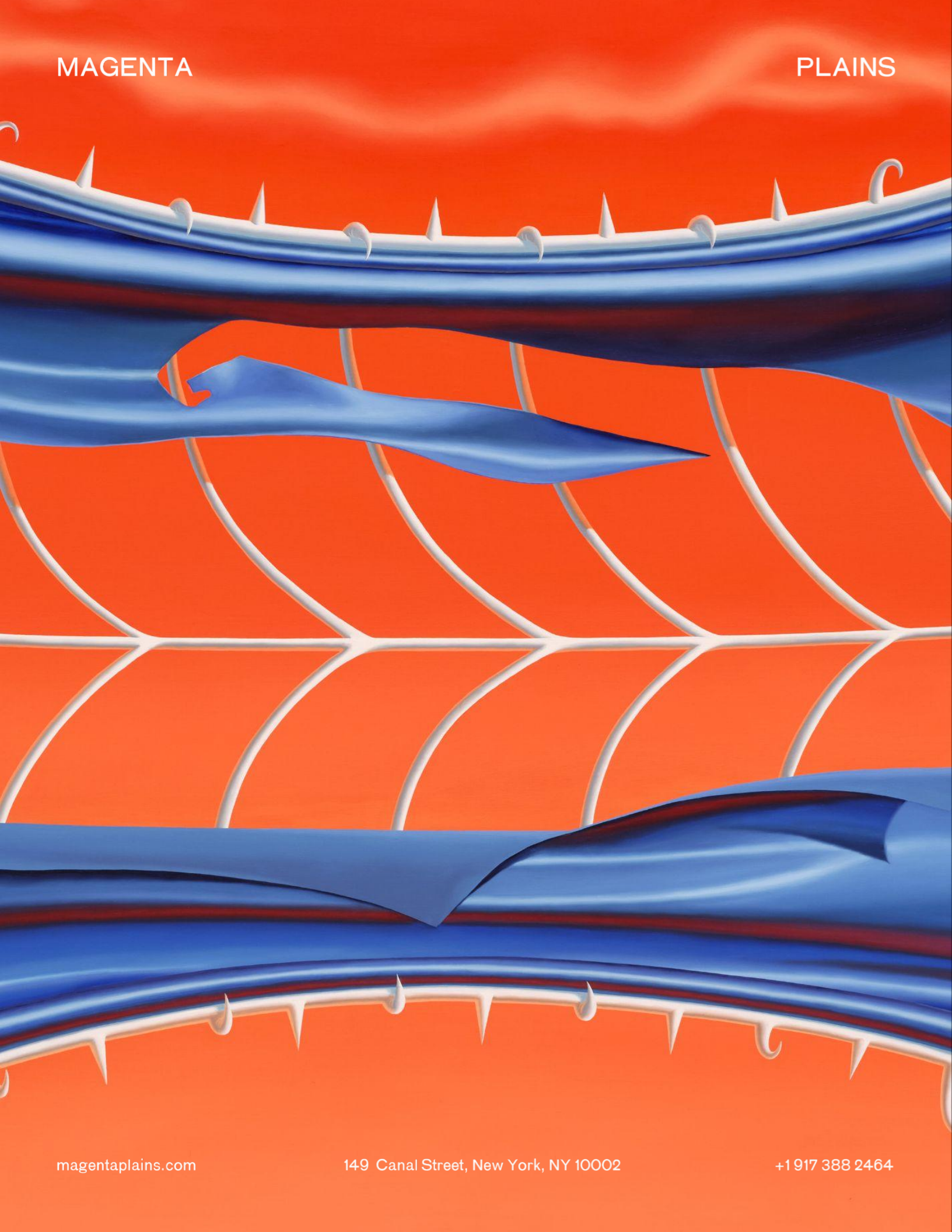


Sascha Braunig
Spine, 2023
Oil on linen over panel
44 x 70 in.

MAGENTA PLAINS



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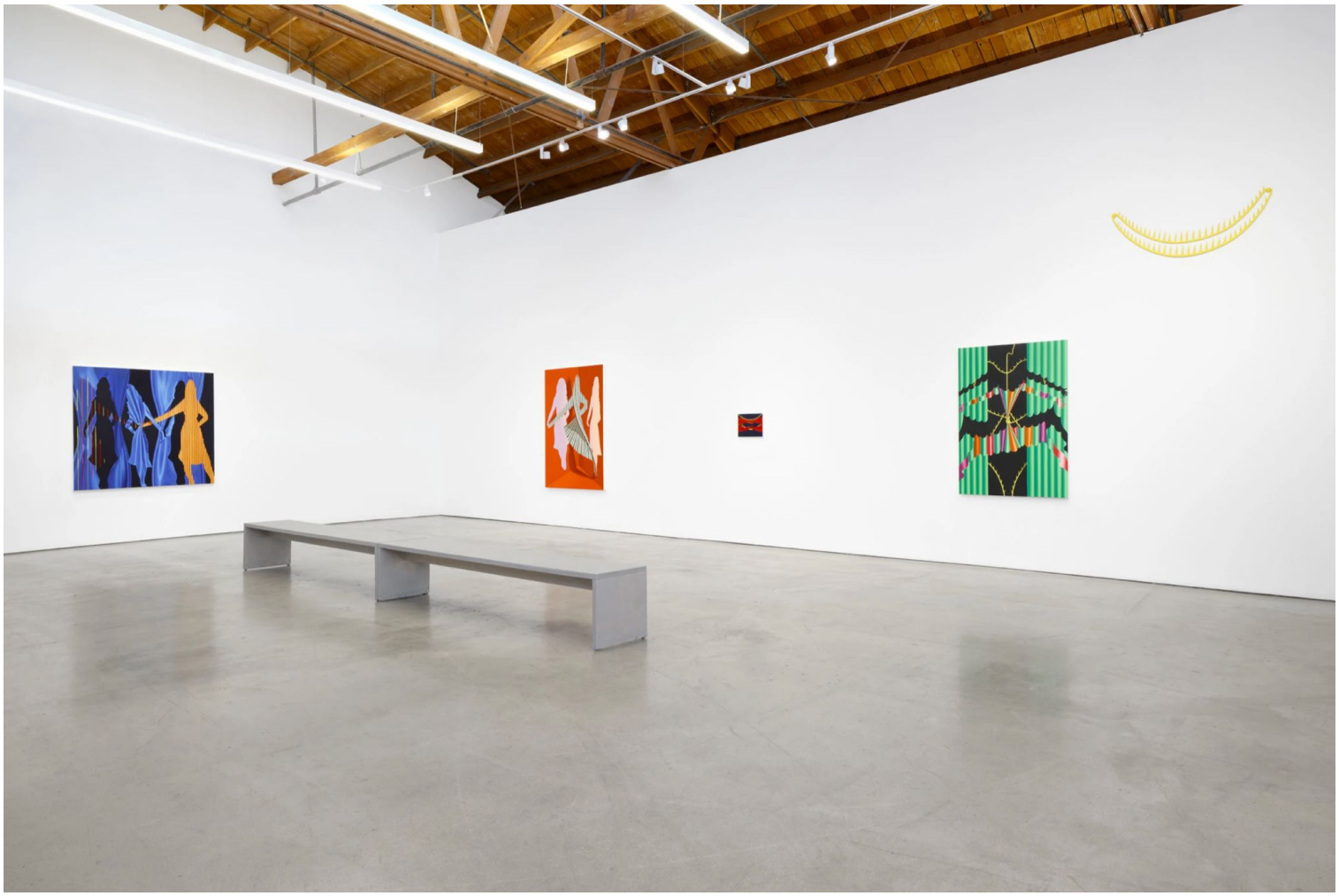
Sascha Braunig | Select Exhibitions 2023–24



Poseuses
François Ghebaly, Los Angeles, CA

Sascha Braunig | Select Exhibitions 2022

Lay Figure
Magenta Plains, New York, NY

Sascha Braunig | Select Exhibitions 2016–17

Sascha Braunig: Shivers
MoMA PS1, New York, NY

Sascha Braunig | Select Exhibitions 2016

Torsion
Kunstall Stavanger, Stavanger, NO

The New York Times
31 March 2022

The New York Times

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

LOWER EAST SIDE

Sascha Braunig

Through April 16, François Ghebaly, 391 Grand Street, Manhattan; 646-559-9400, ghebaly.com. Through April 21, Magenta Plains, 94 Allen Street, Manhattan; 917-388-2464, magentaplains.com.

Sascha Braunig's "Fountain" (2021), oil on linen over panel. Sascha Braunig and François Ghebaly; Dario Lasagni

In her latest Neo-Surrealist paintings, Sascha Braunig has gained in narrative complexity what she has lost in formal punch. It is a worthy trade-off — although I miss the power of some of her earlier works, especially the mysterious, Magrittean heads shrouded in exquisite, glowing trompe-l'oeil patterns that matched the background. These may have reached their culmination in the artist's shows at Foxy Production, her former New York gallery, in 2015, and MoMA/P.S. 1 in 2017.

In the years since, Braunig's work has increasingly focused on the human body, or at least on a highly attenuated headless intimation thereof, cryptically defined by narrow tubular lines both smooth and thorny. In ambitious shows of new paintings and related studies at Magenta Plains and François Ghebaly, two galleries in the Lower East Side, she has pushed more deeply into a slightly ominous feminist territory, one where suggestions of performance, dressmaking and ambiguous power dynamics circle one another.

Expanses of hanging fabric, in which Braunig's love of color and light are especially strong, suggest stage curtains, but have been cut open and sharply gathered, usually by the wiry figures, to suggest both gowns and hourglasses. This occurs most clearly in a painting at Magenta Plains, where a yellow curtain is transformed into a gown by an attenuated figure of red lines which seems more puppet master than mannequin. The painting's title, like the show's, is "Lay Figure." Aptly enough, this is the term for wood dolls with adjustable limbs that figurative artists use as substitutes for living models. *ROBERTA SMITH*


MAGENTA
PLAINS
Melissa Brown

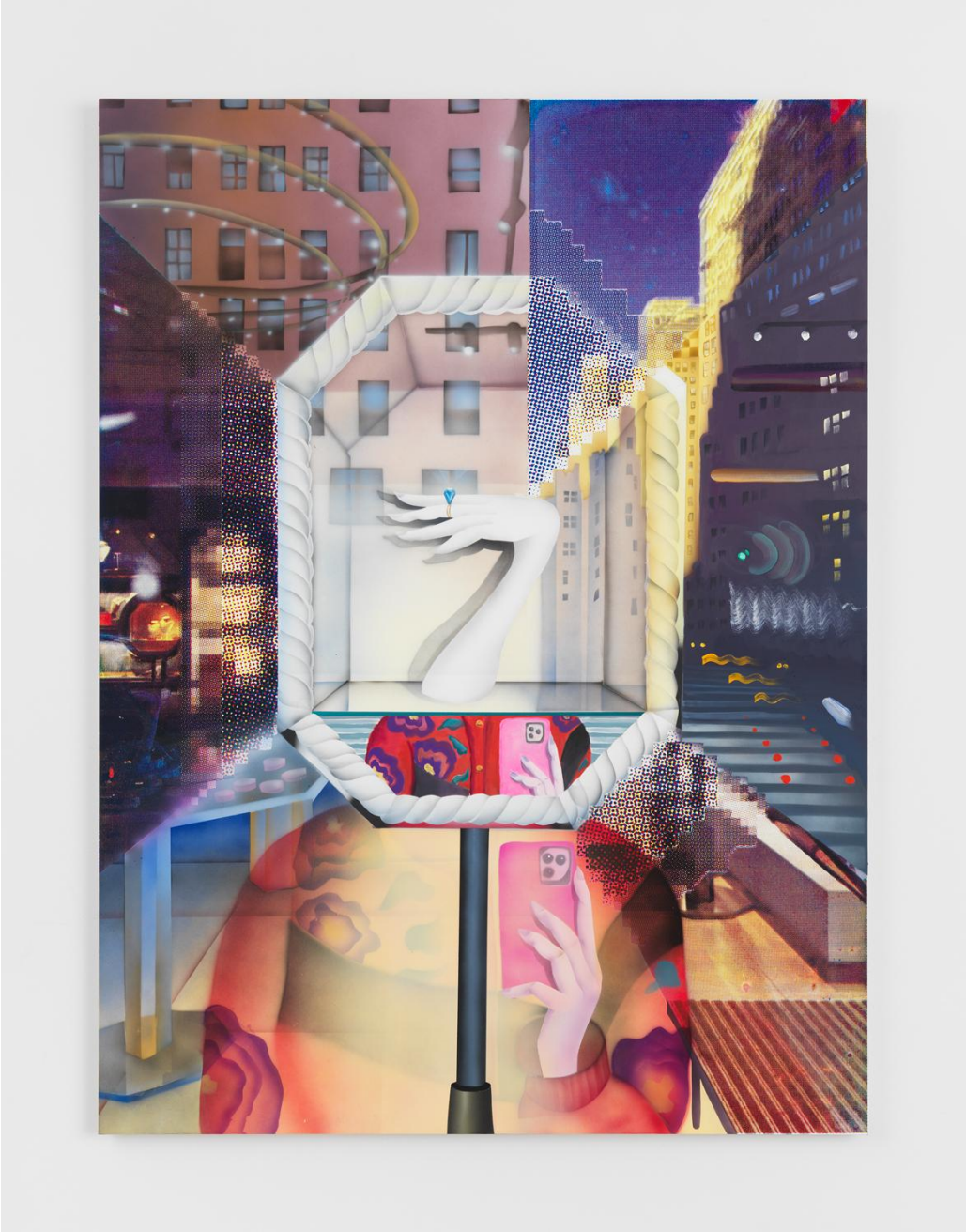
Artist Biography

Born in 1974, Morristown, NJ
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

Melissa Brown's practice is an ongoing investigation into the nature of reality, particularly how contemporary life slides between strolling the sidewalk and scrolling our phones…..and how this straddled split turns an ordinary day into a waking dream haunted by synchronistic symbols, idealized memory fragments and distortions of physical space. Using a mashup of representational modes in painting she depicts spatial phenomena inside familiar scenes: uploading an image, facing mirrors creating infinity, the sky reflecting in the black mirror of a phone. The motifs derive from observed, personal experiences but could be from anyone's point of view. Her aesthetics hue from ubiquitous, commercial print history: cmyk, flat color, isometric perspective, scratch-off layers, tourist postcard compositions and currency. Her idiosyncratic brand of "realism" is obsessed with cataloging the ultra-modern sensation of existing in multiple, simultaneous realms. Playing cards and signifiers of luck and fortune drift through her scenes, a nod to the eternal power struggle between history, personal will and chance.

Painting is at the center of Brown's practice, but she also works in print, animation and performance. Recent paintings have embedded QR codes that open animations that expand painted scenes into another dimension. For ten years, Brown has organized poker games played for art at galleries and art fairs. This began as an effort to allow artists to use their artwork as a direct currency, unconverted to fiat art market values. Additionally, it's a way to create an art collection through wit, chance and skill.

Brown has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally and is represented by Derek Eller Gallery in New York City. She was awarded a Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program residency in 2024-25. In 2012, she was awarded the Joan Mitchell Painter's Grant and a residency at the Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans, 2019. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the New York Department of Education and the Fidelity Corporate Collection. She is a Professor in studio art at Lehman College of the City University of New York.



Melissa Brown

Window Shopping, 2025

Flashe, cmyk screen-print, acrylic and oil on dibond

54 x 40 in.

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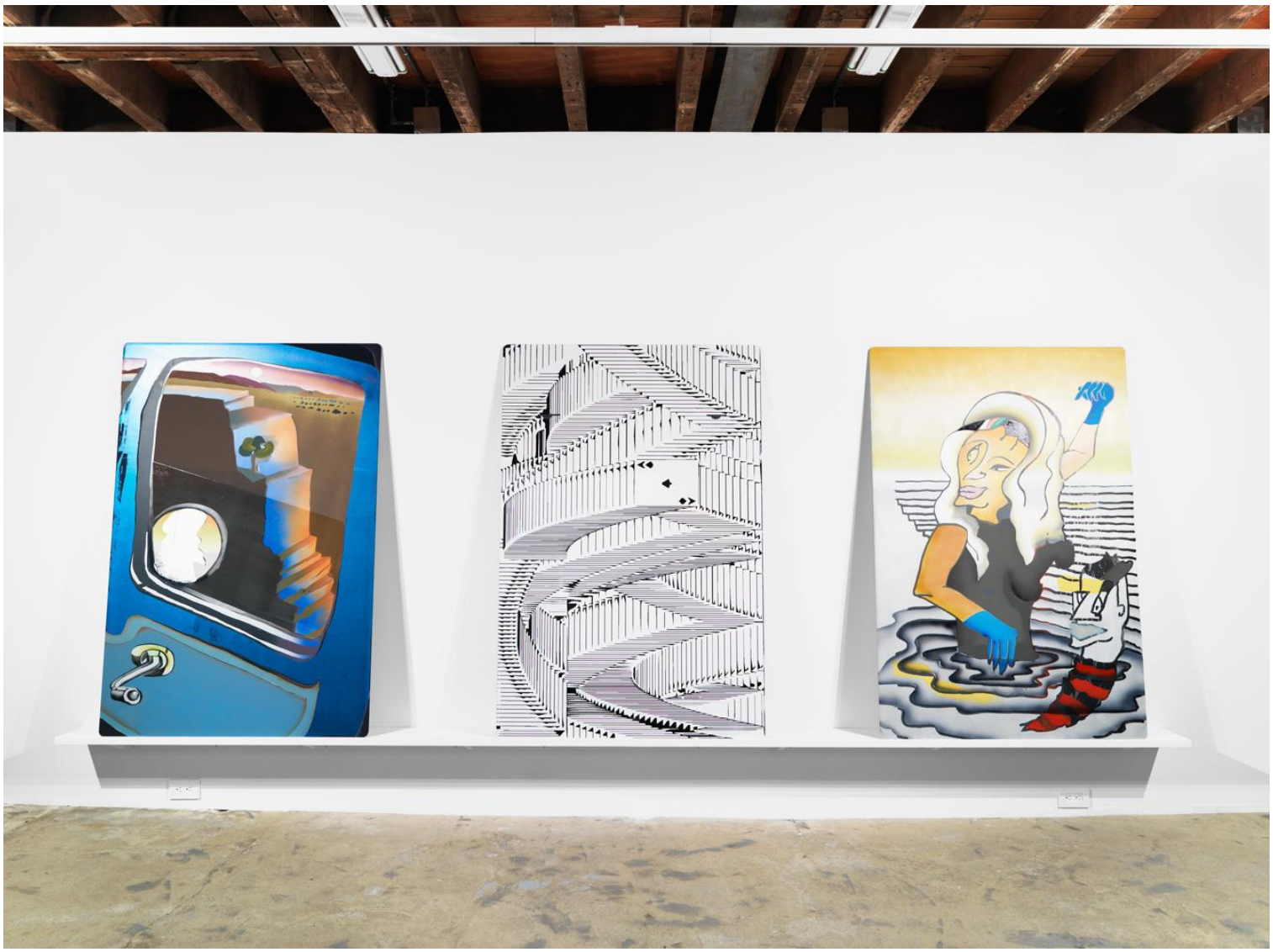
Melissa Brown | Select Exhibitions 2023

Windows and Bars
Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY

Melissa Brown | Select Exhibitions 2022

West Coast Paintings
Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles, CA

Melissa Brown | Select Exhibitions 2016



Past Present Future
Magenta Plains, New York, NY

The New York Times
June 27, 2018

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

Melissa Brown

Through July 6. Derek Eller, 300 Broome Street, Manhattan, 212-206-6411, derekeller.com.

Melissa Brown's painting "i,25" (2018) in the show "Between States" at Derek Eller Gallery. Melissa Brown/Derek Eller Gallery

According to a gushy, memoir-style news release, Melissa Brown's current show of paintings, "Between States" at Derek Eller, depicts the drive through the American South and her visit to the folk artist Howard Finster's "Paradise Garden" in Summerville, Ga. Given the paintings themselves, however, and the fact that Ms. Brown is a principal in the artist-run gallery Essex Flowers, which often showcases art created in digital media, "between states" feels more like something else: an analysis of contemporary painting and vision influenced by new media and the shift from analog images to digitally coded ones.

Windows and screens appear frequently here, as do drop shadows, flattened gradients and the odd perspectives of video games and digital animation. (Ms. Brown paints, prints, stencils and sprays on thin aluminum and Dibond panels, enhancing the screenlike flatness of the works.) The piece "i,25" (2018) shows the view out of a windshield with a smartphone in the foreground mapping the journey, and the driver's reflection in the rearview mirror.

"Finster's Mirror House" (2017) copies the early 20th-century open-window-compositions of Matisse and Derain, which were meant to disrupt traditional, Renaissance one-point perspective. "Swamp" (2018) looks like a trippy video-game landscape, but it also echoes Southeast Asian paintings with shape-shifting gods, animals, water and mirrors. "California Common Law" (2018) includes a convex mirror in the corner — a homage to Jan van Eyck's "Arnolfini Wedding" (1434), which famously played tricks with mirrors and windows.

The road trip (and, in one painting, the view from the artist's studio in Crown Heights, Brooklyn) serves as a leitmotif, but it's really incidental. The whole show is an impressive tour — or detour — into states of looking and perception, with only a few slips into gimmickry. *MARTHA SCHWENDENER*

Becky Kolsrud

Artist Biography

Born 1984, Los Angeles, CA
Lives and works in Los, Angeles, CA

Becky Kolsrud's practice explores art-historical and vernacular depictions of the human form—namely women—throughout advertisements, signage, bather paintings, Japanese prints, surrealism, and abstraction. Her figurative paintings and wholly invented "inscapes" (interior landscapes that depict contained worlds of pink bodies against swaths of blue) are very much rooted in the real world, specifically her hometown, Los Angeles, and its complex relationship with nature. Kolsrud draws on motifs and imagery from the city's history—and her own family's place in that history—as well as religious and architectural iconography to explore the tension between artifice and reality; patterns planned and random; the observed and the observer; scale, place, and perspective; and how human desire fills in the gaps between what is seen and what is obscured. Her playful fascination with incomplete beauty (floating limbs, disembodied feet) falls in a continuum that starts with the degraded works of art handed down from ancient Greece, through the Catholic relics that imbue toes and wooden splinters with holy power, to the fragmented landscapes between concrete and mountain, palm tree and rubber, found today in Southern California.

The artist received an MFA from University of California, Los Angeles (2012) and a BA from New York University (2006). Important solo exhibitions include Elegies, JTT, New York, NY (2021); As Above, So Below, Make Room, Los Angeles, CA (2020); and Yackety Yack Girls, Karma, New York, NY (2011). Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Aïshti Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon; Gavlak Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, UK; Magenta Plains, New York, NY; Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; and Fredericks & Freiser, New York, NY. Kolsrud's work is in the permanent collection of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA.

Becky Kolsrud

Muse Realm (Human/Synthetic), 2023

Oil on canvas

66 x 58 in.

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Becky Kolsrud | Select Exhibitions 2024

Ghosts of the Boulevard
Morán Morán, Los Angeles, CA

Becky Kolsrud | Select Exhibitions 2021

Elegies
JTT, *New York, NY*

Becky Kolsrud | Select Exhibitions 2018

Snarl of Twine
Magenta Plains, New York, NY

The New Yorker
February 21, 2021

THE NEW YORKER

ART

BECKY KOLSRUD

By Johanna Fateman

February 25, 2021

With a limited palette and a strict lexicon of images, this Los Angeles-based painter brushes into existence a mythic, metaphysical realm of O'Keeffian horizons, blobby clouds, high heels, and salmon-colored women. The centerpiece of her exhibition "Elegies," at the JTT gallery, is a fifteen-foot-long panorama, completed in 2021. Titled "The Chorus," it can be read as an allegory of the past year of isolation and mourning. A body of water is dotted with small islands, populated by cypress trees whose trunks are human legs; an open casket floats in the center of the composition. In another, smaller landscape, bordered by a band of sky blue, a neon-pink skull rests on the curve of a green planet as a lemon moon blares from the corner. On the floor, Kolsrud has installed a sculptural counterpart to her canvases—an expanse of mannequin feet in clear plastic mules—as if to suggest that every utopian Eden or Lesbos has a dystopia lurking beneath. *(JTT; Jan. 30–March 13.)*

Danica Lundy

Artist Biography

Born 1991, Salt Spring Island, BC
Lives and works in Southbury, CT and Brooklyn, NY

Danica Lundy's paintings unfold like vivid stage plays—densely populated, emotionally charged, and rich with narrative tension. Moving beyond autobiography, her polyphonic scenes embrace the full spectrum of human experience: the epic and the everyday, the ecstatic and the fraught. Beginning with what she calls a "mind-made structure," her works evolve from detailed drawings into gestural, improvisational brushwork—shifting between realism and expressionism, between revelation and concealment.

Lundy draws on her upbringing on Salt Spring Island, Canada. Her memories as a teenager and athlete infuse scenes of parties, classrooms, and sports arenas with the intensity of adolescence—moments where identity wavers and sensation takes over. Through shifting perspectives and reflective surfaces, she pulls the viewer into the heart of the action, implicating them in the act of seeing and being seen. Her work is steeped in references: poetry, music, film, current events, and art history—from Early Netherlandish painting to the raw figuration of Beckmann and Dix, where distortion reflects inner turmoil. At its core, Lundy's practice is a meditation on embodiment—how it feels to inhabit a body, and how emotion lives through it. Her figures, caught in states of surrender or abandon, become vessels for chaos, risk, and ecstasy. Her paintings don't just depict life—they inhabit its urgency, its beauty, and its disquiet.

She received her BFA from Mount Allison University, Sackville, and completed her MFA at the New York Academy of Art, where she concentrated on painting and was awarded the Leipzig International Art Programme Residency and the Chubb Post-Graduate Fellowship. A three-time Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant recipient, Lundy has exhibited internationally, with solo shows in Canada, Italy, Germany, and the United States. Her work is in the public collections of Dallas Museum of Art, Hirshhorn Museum, Institute of Contemporary Art Miami and Sydney Modern Project, New South Wales, Hall Art Foundation, Centre of International Contemporary Art Vancouver and Contemporary Art Foundation, Japan

Recent solo and group exhibitions include Whitecube, London; Super Dakota, Brussels; Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas; Fredericks and Freiser, New York; The Flag Art Foundation, New York; Sotheby's, New York; Kunstmuseum Schloss Derneburg, Hall Art Foundation, Derneburg; Dallas Art Museum, Dallas; Sydney Modern Project/Art Gallery of New South Whales, Sydney among others.

Danica Lundy
Next In Line, 2025
Oil on canvas
74 x 48 in.

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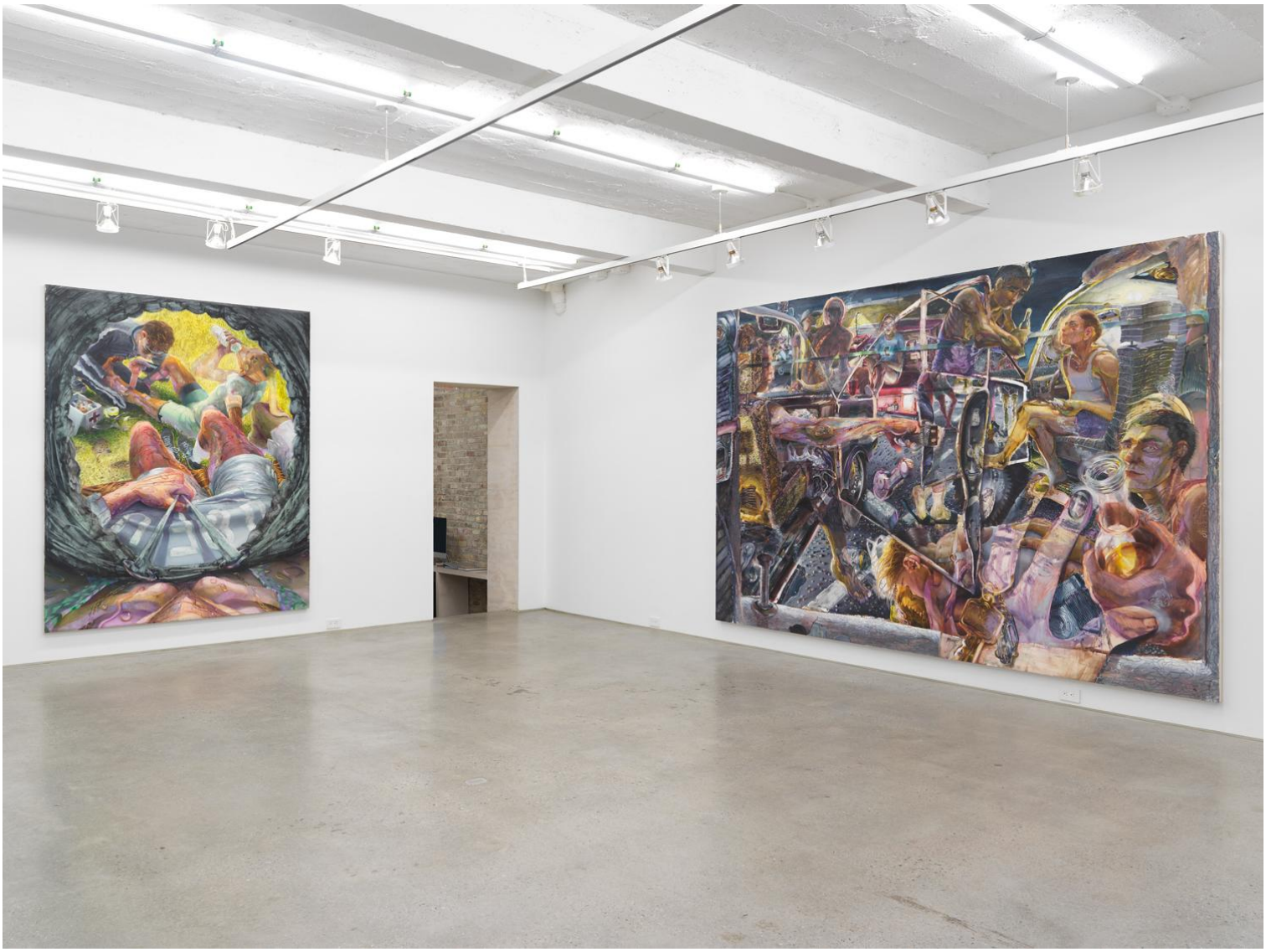
Danica Lundy | Select Exhibitions 2024

The Inside Out
Kunstmuseum Schloss Derneburg, Hall Art Foundation, Derneburg, DE

Danica Lundy | Select Exhibitions 2024

Boombox
White Cube, London, UK

Danica Lundy | Select Exhibitions 2022



Three Hole Punch
Magenta Plains, New York, NY

Frieze
May 22, 2024

FRIEZE

Must-See: Going Under Danica Lundy's Knife

In a new series of paintings at White Cube Mason's Yard, the artist interrogates the political and social subjugation of women's bodies down to the bone

BY **KIMI ZARATE-SMITH** IN **EXHIBITION REVIEWS** | 22 MAY 24

Danica Lundy's second exhibition at White Cube builds a world disfigured by warped compositions, dissected, sinewy limbs speckled with sweat and blood, shadow figures and blown-up proportions, giving shape to atemporal, anxiety-inducing scenes. 'Boombox' reminds us that female bodies are not temples; they are playgrounds and battlefields, sites on which political and social subjugation render a woman's body both spectacle and leverage. In her carnal paintings, Lundy interrogates this insight down to the bone.

Danica Lundy, *Yank*, 2024, oil on canvas, 91 × 122 cm. Courtesy: the artist; photograph: © White Cube/David Westwood

Painted in the aftermath of the 2022 US Supreme Court ruling that rescinded abortion rights across many states, *Yank* (2024) depicts the removal of an intrauterine device. Lundy's aim is clear: to document the biopolitical experiences of women from an angle of interiority, not at voyeuristic remove. Between two reddened, clenching fists sits the subject's womb with enlarged ovaries and fallopian tubes, suspended by the cross section of a spinal cord. A ribcage tents over an otherwise empty torso, bringing into sharp focus two peering nurses contorted into pelvic bones. From the red void, a plasticky blue hand encroaches, emanating a clinical white light. The visceral sight, worsened by the nurse's little finger forever anchored into the subject's cervix, is an uncomfortable reminder of the breadth of physical and emotional trauma that strains the female body.

Danica Lundy, *I like the boys and the boys like me*, 2023, oil on canvas, 1.9 × 1.2 m. Courtesy: the artist; photograph: © White Cube/David Westwood

Lundy's works hum with tension bursting to be released, as she suspends each scene in motion. Uncanny motifs, paired with the ultra-corporeal, can be seen in works such as *I like the boys and the boys like me* (2023). The doubling of narratives, realised by a compositional mirror-trick, denotes the implications of this bathroom scene. The *boy*'s perspective is a too-familiar, manipulated recollection: his beer is swapped out for a water bottle, his hand placed on her hip has moved to the counter. In the lower corner, the subject is gendered by a tampon in-use, which appears in other paintings in the show. A girl, ponytail-up, maybe our main character, crouches over a toilet seat – a truth only revealed by the mirror.

While the exhibition text suggests that the paintings are at 'the border between what's inside and outside', Lundy's works collapse the thresholds of the hyperreal and the imagined. Her unflinching, somatic transparency gives way to a panoptical perspective which demystifies female anatomy, subverting surrealist (and misogynistic) tropes in the process. In 'Boombox', Lundy effectively explores female pain without ever blaming her subject.

Danica Lundy's 'Boombox' is on view at White Cube Mason's Yard, London, until 29 June

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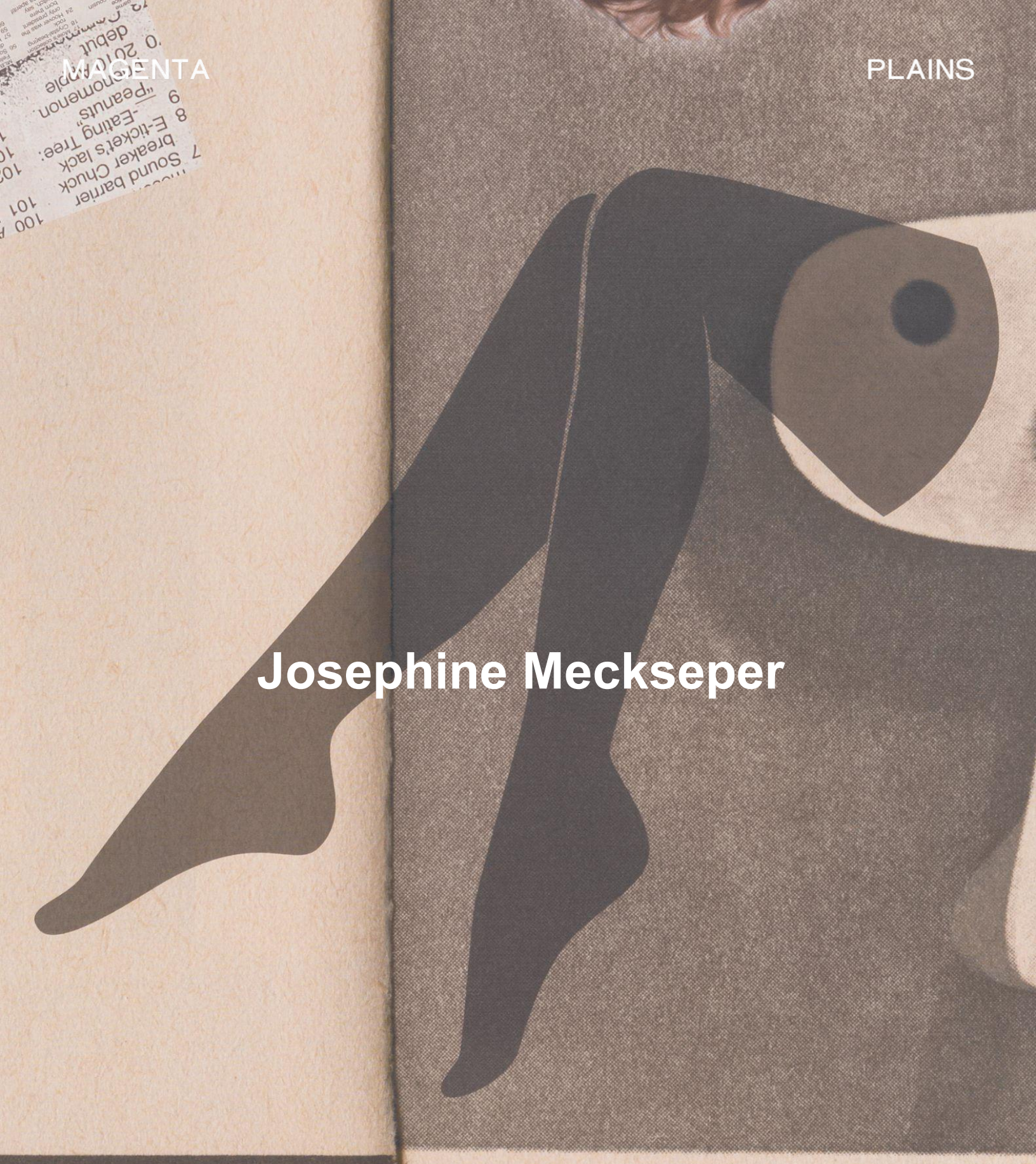

Josephine Meckseper

magentaplains.com 149 Canal Street, New York, NY 10002 +1 917 388 2464

Artist Biography

Born 1964, Lilienthal, DE
Lives in New York, NY

Josephine Meckseper's work conflates the aesthetic language of Modernism with the formal languages of commercial display and advertising. In her shop window installations, large-scale display sculptures, and films, Meckseper exposes the paradoxes of consumer culture through the combination of mass-produced objects with images and artefacts of historical and political events. Josephine Meckseper was born in Lilienthal, Germany and lives and works in New York. She received her MFA from Cal Arts in 1992. Prior to this she studied at the Hochschule der Künste, Berlin (1986-90).

Meckseper's work has been included in two Whitney Biennials (2006 and 2010); the Sharjah Biennial (2011); and the Taipei Biennial (2014). In 2007 a major retrospective on her work was organised by the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart. Meckseper's large-scale public project, Manhattan Oil Project, was commissioned by the Art Production Fund and installed in a lot adjacent to Times Square in New York, in 2012. In 2015 her works were featured in Storylines, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Zabludowicz Collection: 20 Years, London; and America Is Hard to See, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Recent institutional exhibitions included: Frac des Pays de la Loire and Hab Galerie, Nantes (2019). Her works are in the permanent collections of institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Josephine Meckseper
Somersaulting Dive, 2025
Oil stick and UV ink on canvas
72 x 92 in.

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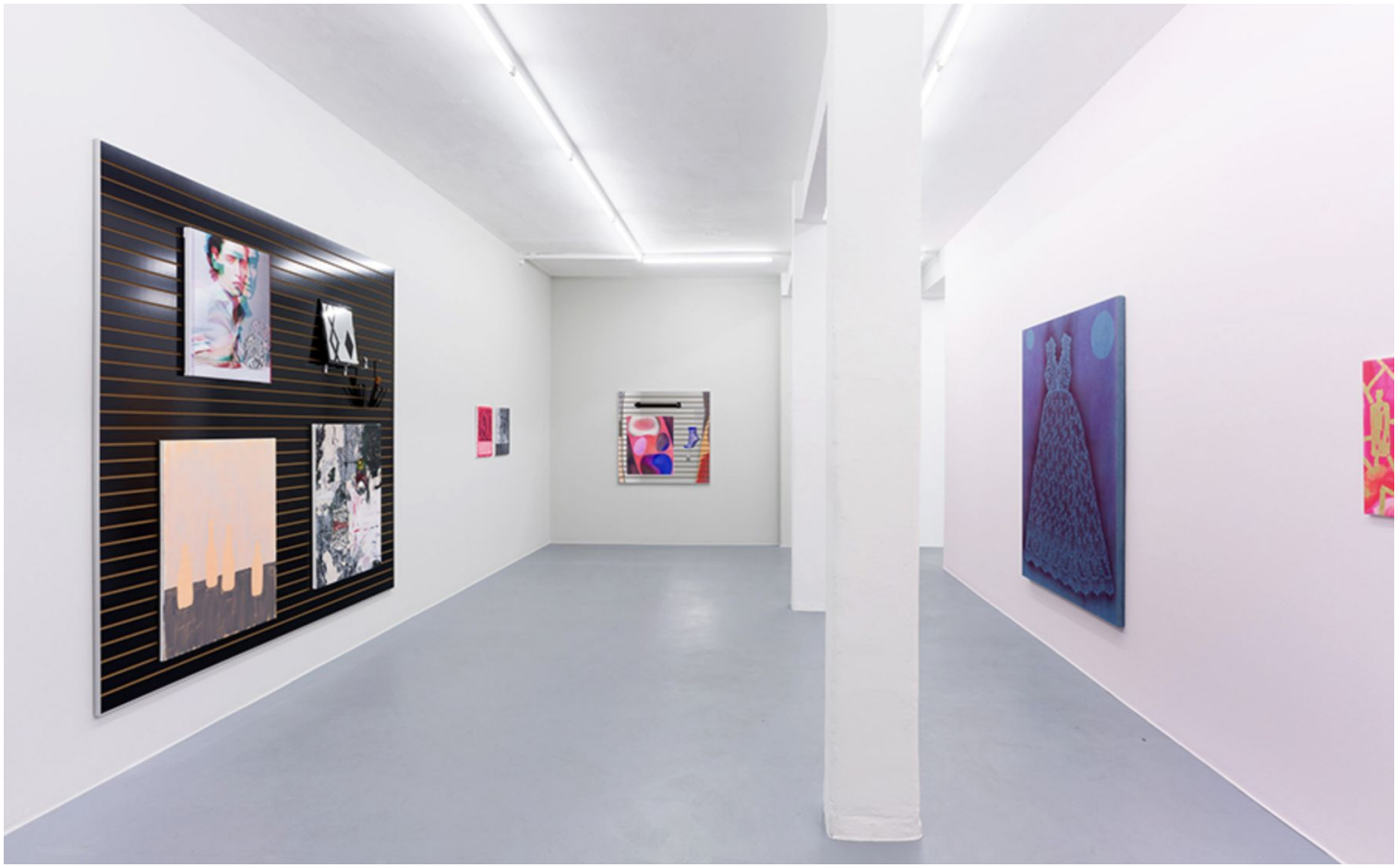
Josephine Meckseper | Select Exhibitions 2024



Babysäbelzahntigervollkaskoversicherungsantragsstellungsurkunde
Galerie Elisabeth & Reinhard Hauff, Stuttgart, DE

Josephine Meckseper | Select Exhibitions 2019

Josephine Meckseper
Hab Galerie, Nantes, FR

Josephine Meckseper | Select Exhibitions 2016

Josephine Meckseper
Gagosian, Paris, FR

The New York Times
October 21, 2014

The New York Times

Watch the full interview HERE.

What Made Me | Josephine Meckseper

Poppy de Villeneuve • October 21, 2014

The artist discusses the political aspect of her artworks and FAT Magazine, a conceptual project that doubled as a declaration of love to NYC.

Interview Magazine
November 25, 2013

Interview

Josephine Meckseper and the Burden of History

By Allyson Shiffman

November 25, 2013

Josephine Meckseper is adept at critiquing her environment. She questioned the prosperity of the art world by placing an "Out of Business" sign in the window of a gallery in Chelsea (a similarly cheeky "Help Wanted" sign attracted up to 20 applicants a day who had failed to get in on the joke). In 2012 she erected two 25-foot oil rigs in the heart of Times Square to remind unsuspecting tourists about the perils of capitalism and industrialization. Her work critically examines mass media, our consumption-obsessed society, and even our political systems. But for her most recent solo exhibition at Andrea Rosen in Chelsea, Meckseper turned her attention towards something left previously unexamined: her own lineage.

Though Meckseper left Germany for New York on her own accord, she failed to leave behind the burden of guilt felt by many young Germans, even three generations after World War II. The reverberating impact of Meckseper's German heritage is exemplified by her black-and-white images of Niedersachsenstein, a sculpture in Meckseper's hometown of Worpswede that commemorates the soldiers who perished in World War I. This historic image is juxtaposed against glossy ad images and Meckseper's vitrines—recognizable reconstructions of modern store displays. The uniquely personal nature of the exhibit became clear when we sat down with Meckseper to discuss leaving the sheltered artistic community of Worpswede, living in New York, and the Christmas displays at Macy's.

ALLYSON SHIFFMAN: There's a sense of irony in that the advertising imagery in this exhibit closely resemble the ad pages one would find in an issue of *Interview*. Do you have any misgivings about that?

JOSEPHINE MECKSEPER: That's funny—no one has ever asked me that. Obviously my work speaks to the usage of advertising. The abstractions in my paintings were actually based on how you divide an advertising page—the quarter-page, half-page ads. Since it's so much a part of what I've been doing, it's good to embrace the media rather than try to ignore it.

SHIFFMAN: Worpswede seems to be this sheltered artistic utopia. At what point did you start to become aware of the world beyond this community?

MECKSEPER: I moved to Tuscany right after high school, which was actually not very different in the sense that it was extremely sheltered and very much formed by cultural history. There was little mainstream contemporary consumer culture there, at all. Then I was briefly in Berlin studying at Berlin University of the Arts, but Berlin was so underground at that time. The wall was still up, so it was much more about being in this island inside of East Germany. I was completely in favor of the division of Germany—it's kind of a leftist stance. We all felt it was not justified that it would ever be unified.

So it was really only when I moved to Los Angeles to go to CalArts—that was the big shift for me—to be outside of L.A., in Valencia, where it's all about the mall. That was the beginning of deciphering the language and the vocabulary of the mall and the culture that comes with that.

SHIFFMAN: That's an extreme introduction to consumer culture—especially at a time when the mall was still very relevant. It's evident in your film that explores the Mall of America that mall culture is waning. Does this amplify the quality of relic in your work?

MECKSEPER: It does. The whole idea of the window displays is already becoming something very historicizing. It's more about looking at something that's disappearing in our culture. There was a time that the Christmas decorations on Fifth Avenue were a big event—people would come from the suburbs. Now I can imagine a young kid saying, "There's no way I'm going to go to that." [*laughs*]

SHIFFMAN: [*laughs*] To anyone who isn't from New York, the notion of unveiling the Macy's window displays being an event is so peculiar. Is your studio still in Chinatown?

MECKSEPER: It is. It's near Orchard Street on the Lower East Side, where there are still some of the older Jewish shops. There's this one lingerie store that has extra-large women's underwear. So there's literally these huge underwear displays... nobody now would display something that is that unattractive. It's pretty surreal.

SHIFFMAN: This show encompasses so much more than the consumerism issues—particularly with the images of the Niedersachsenstein monument in Worpswede. What did that monument mean to you growing up?

MECKSEPER: I always liked to make up stories and narratives. I would bring other kids there and tell them all kinds of stories about what I thought it was.

SHIFFMAN: Can you recall any of these stories?

MECKSEPER: A lot of the fantasies revolved around us having been told that after the war a family had to live in the basement of the monument because there was no place else for them to stay. They had come from the East, fleeing from the Russians. **During Fascism the monument was declared degenerate art and it was supposed to be torn down. In the 70s when we were going there, we didn't really see it as artwork as much as a place for us to hide. We also tried to break in to see how they might have lived in there.** It's tucked inside of a forest and when I grew up people didn't really want to go there. People would rather try to forget about it-nobody wanted to be reminded of the war at that point**. Now it's slightly different.**

SHIFFMAN: When I first visited Germany, I was overwhelmed by the burden of guilt felt by young people and all the monuments built to serve as reminders.

MECKSEPER: It is. It's huge.

SHIFFMAN: How do you approach doing a show in New York, in Chelsea, differently? Are the stakes higher given this is essentially the most consumerist of cities?

MECKSEPER: All my previous gallery shows that I've done here were hinting directly at that issue. It's so much a part of my practice to be conscious of the environment. It goes back to being at CalArts and studying with Michael Asher, where it was really about institutional critique, but this show is a lot less about that. Chelsea is so oversaturated, it's not that interesting anymore. So it was an opportunity for me to dig deeper into what it means to be a German artist in New York.

SHIFFMAN: And what does that mean?

MECKSEPER: It's sort of what it means for me having come here without being forced. That whole guilt thing was so heavy on me—when you're really sensitive, you can't live with it. It was actually unbearable to stay [in Germany] and be constantly reminded of it. I'm the third generation after the war, so it feels selfish for me to say that I'm somehow affected by what happened, but it's still so much a part of my life. This is the first time I felt like I'm actually bringing that into the work. Of course there's all the consumerism, but there's also another truth, which is more biographical.

SHIFFMAN: Your work has also touched on issues surrounding the oil trade. I'm curious about what your thoughts are on the emerging art scenes in oil rich countries like Qatar?

MECKSEPER: There are very different aspects to it. When I was in the United Emirates participating in the 2011 Sharjah Biennale, even though they censored some of the works and they fired the director of the museum, it was such a great opportunity to begin opening up that society. I was in this building near the main museum that was next to a mosque. People would go to the mosque and they would stop at the museum afterwards—I don't know if it was because the AC was running [*laughs*], but it seemed very organic. It was actually providing opportunities and jobs in and around the museums, especially for the local females interested in art. So I'm actually for it.

SHIFFMAN: So what else have you been working on?

MECKSEPER: I'm working on proposal for a competition to create an outdoor environment at a prison in Germany. It's in Stammheim, which was the prison for the Baader-Meinhof Group—the German terrorist group from the '70s. My aunt was sort of on the fringes of it.

SHIFFMAN: That's fascinating. How does a competition like that even come to exist?

MECKSEPER: The Green Party is running the state where the prison is, so they have all these innovative ideas. It's a very, very unusual project.

SHIFFMAN: Everything you do has such weight to it. What do you do to relax or escape?

MECKSEPER: I don't really do anything to relax and escape. If I could take a vacation that would be great, but I never do. [*laughs*] I like badminton. I never have time to play, but when I do, it's my favorite thing.

SHIFFMAN: Are you an optimist or a pessimist?

MECKSEPER: I'm sure most people would say I'm a pessimist. [*laughs*]

SHIFFMAN: [*laughs*] Probably.

MECKSEPER: ...But I think of myself as an optimist.

JOSEPHINE MECKSEPER'S SELF-TITLED SOLO EXHIBITION IS ON DISPLAY AT ANDREA ROSEN GALLERY THROUGH JANUARY 18.

Ebecho Muslimova

Artist Biography

Born in 1984, Makhachkala, Dagestan, U.S.S.R.
Lives and works in Mexico City, MX

Ebecho Muslimova, known for her raucous and sexually uninhibited character "Fatebe" creates paintings and works on paper that beguile the eye as much as they humor the mind. Fatebe's physical contortions and unpredictable quandaries play themselves out like performances on the canvas: each work depicts a single event that uncannily combines self-consciousness, comedy and vulnerability. Muslimova's technical prowess as a painter helps to underscore the sheer delight of Fatebe's misadventures. "As her life continues, Fatebe is faced with newly articulated objects, stretched over landscapes that are populated with new temptations and ghosts. With adoring precision, Muslimova codifies the echoes of domesticity, luxury, nature, education, psychology, fetish, and art itself—images that have the capacity to haunt her. Nothing can deter Fatebe, though. From her gleeful smile, we can assume that her convictions only gain momentum with every new opportunity to test them." (Quote from Natasha Stagg, Cura Magazine).

Muslimova received her BFA at Cooper Union in New York, NY in 2010. Muslimova has presented solo exhibitions at Mendes Wood DM, São Paolo, BR; Bernheim Gallery, Zürich, CH; Magenta Plains, New York, NY; The Drawing Center, New York, NY; David Zwirner Gallery, London, UK; White Flag Projects, St. Louis, MO and Room East, New York, NY. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Kunstmuseum Basel, CH; ICA Miami, FL; Renaissance Society, Chicago, IL; Zuzeum, Riga, LV; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; Swiss Institute, New York, NY; Kunsthalle St. Gallen, CH. Her large-scale murals have been commissioned for biennials such as The Dreamers, 58th Edition of October Salon, Belgrade, RS and The 32nd Biennale of Graphic Arts: Birth As Criterion, Ljubljana, SI. In 2022 Muslimova was the recipient of the Borlem Prize, honoring artists whose oeuvre brings awareness to mental health issues & struggles. Her work has been featured in publications such as Forbes, The New York Times, Artforum, Art in America, Mousse, Artnet, Hyperallergic, and Cura Magazine, among others. Muslimova is included in Jeffrey Deitch's book, Unrealism, featuring 27 artists and major essays by Johanna Fateman, Alison Gingeras, and Aria Dean.

Muslimova's work is in public collections including The Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; ICA Miami, Miami, FL; MAMCO Geneva, Geneva, CH; RISD Museum, Providence, RI; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY and Zuzeum, Riga, LV.

Ebecho Muslimova

Fatebe Horse and Carriage, 2022

Enamel and oil paint on Dibond aluminum

96 x 96 in.

magentaplains.com 149 Canal Street, New York, NY 10002 +1 917 388 2464

Ebecho Muslimova | Select Exhibitions 2025

Ebecho Muslimova & Maria Lassnig
Magenta Plains, New York, NY

Ebecho Muslimova | Select Exhibitions 2023

FOG
Magenta Plains, New York, NY

Ebecho Muslimova | Select Exhibitions 2019

TRAPS!
Magenta Plains, New York, NY

Interview Magazine
April 11, 2025

Interview

STUDIO VISIT

"Satanic Times Call for Satanic Images": Ebecho Muslimova, in Conversation With Carroll Dunham

By Carroll Dunham

In her recent exhibition at Magenta Plains, Ebecho Muslimova stretches the world around her recurring protagonist "Fatebe," granting her new kinds of architecture and absurdities to explore. Homing in on themes that are more grotesque and sci-fi like, Fatebe starts colliding with objects that defy her cartoonish two-dimensional reality, which Muslimova, while on a call with fellow artist Carroll Dunham last week, dubbed the "Roger Rabbit Effect." Phoning in from his Connecticut studio, the 75-year-old Dunham has also spent his career with humanoid, "Disney-line" formed characters that open up new vessels for storytelling, demonstrated most recently at his solo show at Max Hetzler in London, where bodily exploration and a cartoon dog take center stage. Whilst the two artists had only met once before, their shared interests and influences meant that they had a lot of ground to cover, from consciousness and comic books to the eternal question of when, and how, to kill off your avatar. "It's fun for us to talk," Dunham said. "I feel like there are quite a few overlaps in our attitude."

CARROLL DUNHAM: I'm sorry we've never met in person.

EBECHO MUSLIMOVA: We have actually, and I wanted to remind you.

DUNHAM: When did we meet? I'm sorry, I don't remember.

MUSLIMOVA: It's okay, I barely remember. I think it was 2015. It was my second group show ever in Zurich. There was no reason why I should have been there because I had no career. But that night spiraled out into some sort of drunken debauchery, and I remember the next day you approached me and I was non-verbal, hungover, and you said something like, "We'll talk another time."

DUNHAM: [Laughs] Well, I guess here we are talking another time. I know that it's probably the first time I saw your work, but I've been aware of it for a while.

MUSLIMOVA: Well, I've always been aware of your work.

DUNHAM: Where do you live?

MUSLIMOVA: I'm back and forth from New York to Mexico City.

DUNHAM: So is your studio in Mexico City?

MUSLIMOVA: My studio officially is in both places, but I'm working right now in Mexico City. I'm a true die-hard New Yorker, and I never thought I would leave, but here I am.

DUNHAM: It's good to do that. Well, I just recently saw the paintings of yours that are up in New York.

MUSLIMOVA: I'm so glad you saw.

Ebecho Muslimova. *Fatebe Io Stalled*, 2024. Oil on canvas. 72 x 72 in. Image courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains, New York, NY.

DUNHAM: I really find them interesting. There are a few things I feel close to in a way. First is this idea of making painting that's driven by a character. The way you're involved with that is probably different from the way I'm thinking about, but just as a way to structure your activity, I relate to it a lot. And also the fact that drawing seems to be the foundation of everything you're doing.

MUSLIMOVA: I was going to say the same about our work. I mean, my character is an entity. She has a personality that's distinct, but the character's psyche is a vehicle to figure out things.

DUNHAM: Right, and it's clearly not just storytelling. It's about making painting situations, different spaces, different constructions.

MUSLIMOVA: Well, the character both as a narrative and as a formal tool to self-organize almost gives permission or justification to then expand into architecture.

DUNHAM: To make places for the character and situations that the character can inhabit.

MUSLIMOVA: Yeah, in a really dumb, elemental way. The body has to be somewhere.

DUNHAM: Yeah. It's the whole way of thinking about stuff. I read part of an interview that you gave where you spoke about this, but the fact that the character is so flat, it could almost look screen printed.

MUSLIMOVA: I like to call it the "Roger Rabbit Effect."

Carroll Dunham, photographed by Laurie Simmons.

DUNHAM: Yeah, that was good. I remember that movie very vividly, that whole thing they were trying to do to put an animated character into a so-called real place.

MUSLIMOVA: I was looking at pictures of your show in London. I wish I could have seen it in person, but I'm thinking about the space within the space, the architecture within the architecture. Is that new?

DUNHAM: Yeah. This story has evolved out of things I was drawing and thinking about. What I've been doing is just not illustrating in the sense that there's a plot–there's no story. It's just that situation that's depicted, and I seem to keep making it over and over and over. It has to do with an image of a studio and a person working in a studio, and then the studio is in another place, and then all of that is in the painting. So it's these different spaces that hold other spaces. I've never really worked so consciously on that sort of construction before.

MUSLIMOVA: Well speaking of character, there's the body that keeps repeating that is flat. But all of the paintings I'm doing right now are also situated in a specific room. Not the studio, but a gallery in which they will be shown. So more and more architecture has been reappearing in my paintings. I used to think that it was putting the thing in the room, but now I realize that the architecture is the other character that somehow has its own thing.

DUNHAM: I've never put it to myself that way, but I completely get how you're representing it, that the spaces are like characters. It really weirded me out a lot when I realized I was kind of drawing my own studio. Well, you tell yourself all kinds of stuff. I've told myself and other people a lot of bullshit about my own work, that I need that in order to even make them. You set up this whole thing and this way of talking about it that gives you some distance from it.

MUSLIMOVA: But do you know that you're lying? Not lying, but do you know yourself that this will change and is a falsehood, that it's just a permission?

DUNHAM: I would say I've begun to suspect. For years, I didn't. I started out absolutely, almost ideologically committed to the idea that I was going to make abstract painting. An very quickly, all these things started to come into the paintings that were representations of things that I was not really owning. People would tell me, "Oh, it's this, it's that." And I would say, "Now you're projecting. It's not."

MUSLIMOVA: Projecting is a big part of it. We make the paintings and then the projection finish off the work.

DUNHAM: I mean, we have our own projections about what we're doing, and you start to learn that when your work is seen by more people. Then you have to process what they see Then that comes back in as information that probably affects how you think about what you're doing.

MUSLIMOVA: I also tell myself a script to start working, but I have by now understood that that has nothing to do with what the painting means to me later. I really try to not hold on to any sort of promise because it's a front. It used to panic me that I only understood what the painting was way after it's done, and only what I'm doing. I need the script in the beginning, but I know that it's just therapy for me and it has nothing to do with the painting.

DUNHAM: It's good that you know that and that you can hold onto those two ideas at the same time.

MUSLIMOVA: I'm trying to be okay with uncertainty. I was reading your interview about starting work early on and all of the structure, when you had a desire to have no structure, but then of course structure comes in, [along with] parameters for your own self. And I know that when I started drawing, before I ever started painting, the only way that I could make that work is if I set up such strict parameters. But because of those strict parameters, I was able to actually have freedom in the work, until I felt like I was in a prison of my own making and then I had to change that around.

DUNHAM: I get that. I think that's when I got the idea that I was going to work on paintings. It was really just what you said just then, that I couldn't figure out what to do. I couldn't find a point or a place to start, really. And none of the people I was close to when I was first trying to be an artist were really making paintings. I was very interested in the history of painting, so I thought, "Oh, flat rectangles, that's great. I'm going to do flat rectangles." And then within that I can do basically whatever.

MUSLIMOVA: Yeah, you have to put the body in the room, but you have to also identify the room. Somebody told me this many years ago, that if one is having a panic attack or something, you should map out and identify the clear architecture of the room in which you're sitting, like a construction.

DUNHAM: [Laughs] I've had plenty, but I don't know if that would've helped me.

MUSLIMOVA: I'm realizing that in order to figure out the abyss of how to start and where to start, I had to build a parameter, literally, for those ideas to feel safe and to start whirling around.

DUNHAM: I was curious about the architectural spaces in those paintings. Like the one that's up at the gallery in New York right now with that female Minotaur bathtub god character.

MUSLIMOVA: It's Io, the one who's turned into a heifer.

DUNHAM: Is that what it's based on?

MUSLIMOVA: So that is an actual paper mache mask made by a sculptor in the '30s for a production of *Prometheus Bound*. So that's her mask and that figure in that painting is a Fatebe.

DUNHAM: Oh, wow. I saw it as a grotesque demigod of some kind.

MUSLIMOVA: I mean, there's another two upstairs. I don't know if you saw them, but things become a little satanic, and I don't know why. Maybe because satanic times call for satanic images.

DUNHAM: And you're working with the skeletons as a subject.

MUSLIMOVA: The skeletons appear and reappear because Fatebe is always alone, and I'm not interested in introducing another. But sometimes I do feel a need to have her interact with a *thing*, but not just an object. And since she's stretched and strong and sort of defies physics, I needed another thing that is anonymous and bound to the human form because she's so specific. She doesn't have bones because she's just a flat line, so I needed bones that adhere to real reality.

DUNHAM: It's amazing to look at human skeletons.

MUSLIMOVA: I've never seen a skeleton in real life, but my parents had this skull that came from my uncle when he was in medical school, back in Dagestan. I think one of his friends dug up a grave or something crazy. But the skull had a name. He was just part of our family.

DUNHAM: That's a lot for a kid to meditate on.

MUSLIMOVA: But I didn't see anything to do with death. I think my first interaction with art was my dad showing me [Hieronymus] Bosch, the heaven and hell. And somehow, when I immigrated to America, that mixed in with the seductive line of Disney. So really it's some mix of Bosch and Disney, which I think is still what happens.

DUNHAM: How old were you when you came over here?

MUSLIMOVA: I was almost seven. And I don't care about cartoons or comics, none of that interests me, but the flat facade, the deep seduction of the Disney line really got me.

DUNHAM: For most of my working life, I felt similarly. When I first started having my paintings shown in galleries and they would get written about, people would always make some reference to cartooning, and it really drove me crazy because that wasn't at all the way I was thinking. But I realized as things went along that I had just devoured cartoons when I was a child, like many of us. I was part of the generation of Zap Comix and I was interested in all of that psychedelic culture. It had a huge impact on me, but it felt like it was a completely separate part of me from the part that decided to be a serious artist and make paintings. I guess now I've given in to the fact that, somewhere in all the massive influences that are in the culture, the seductiveness of the golden age of cartoons is amazing.

MUSLIMOVA: Yeah. But it also was geopolitical for me. That's what's fun about painting, I guess, that it just keeps revealing your own false narratives or storylines that are then taken down and rebuilt. You're not a stable subject. Like, we like painting and the career is fun, but what doesn't keep me from getting bored is that each painting reveals something bigger than me, somehow.

DUNHAM: Yeah. I feel that more and more as time has gone on, because the thing that I found amazing is the way it keeps pulling me to the next thing. I don't feel like I really have ideas. I feel like my whole artmaking practice always starts with drawings. But if I allow myself to receive it, it's telling me what to do and bringing me to the next location, so to speak. Like, this thing I'm involved with now, the paintings that are at the gallery in London, I didn't see that ahead of time. I only saw little glimpses of it in drawings or in aspects of paintings I was making before. It came out from the mist of all these different things pointing toward it. And then I had something to work on.

MUSLIMOVA: I mean, god forbid you see what you're doing before it's done, because then why do you need to do it?

DUNHAM: Yeah. I mean, it's fun for us to talk. I feel like there are quite a few overlaps in our attitude, but in the end, you're making these things to be looked at, and if you could say what they are, you wouldn't make them.

MUSLIMOVA: Also, to make things to be looked at, that's a big part. We have a need to take the thing from inside and put it out there. You could get into psychoanalysis but, I mean, it's a *need*. It's not just a desire.

DUNHAM: It would be a lot simpler if it were only a desire because otherwise it wouldn't be so unpleasant most of the time. I don't know if you hear this from people who are having a very sincere reaction to something you've made and saying, "That looks like it was really fun to make." I have to say, I don't know if I've ever made anything that was fun to make.

MUSLIMOVA: But it's nice to hold on to that glimmer. It's fun to get the feeling of getting on the horse.

DUNHAM: I would agree with that. My consciousness splits into Dunham who's working on the painting and this avatar that's over here, who's looking at me looking at the painting thinking, "Oh, this is actually pretty cool." But it's not always like that.

MUSLIMOVA: Yeah.

DUNHAM: What you just said a minute ago about what you're experiencing internally, or wherever thoughts happen to get it out into some sort of object form, that's a really mysterious process. And it's what we go back to over and over again, putting something emotional or psychological or spiritual into the form of objects, and then other people look at them. That whole interaction is really deep and complicated, and one feels compelled to just go back over and over again to do it.

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MUSLIMOVA: What you said about the split between you looking at yourself making the work, and then you being the work, as I'm understanding my character and the Fatebe character, it's like, in the studio, I'm the boss and I'm the worker. I'm the boss exploiting the worker. But somehow, I'm putting her in these situations, and then she is compelling me to be put in a real-life situation where I'm working a ridiculous amount of time. It's not the nicest relationship, but it's a necessary one. And there is a dynamic between the two, but I literally needed to make another, to have this dance with that will justify me doing this to myself.

DUNHAM: It's an amazing gift that your work gave you, to have this avatar. What you said is amazing, that you're the boss and the exploited worker all at once.

MUSLIMOVA: In an eternal factory.

DUNHAM: Do you ever feel trapped by the character? I've had that happen to me in a couple of different phases of my work.

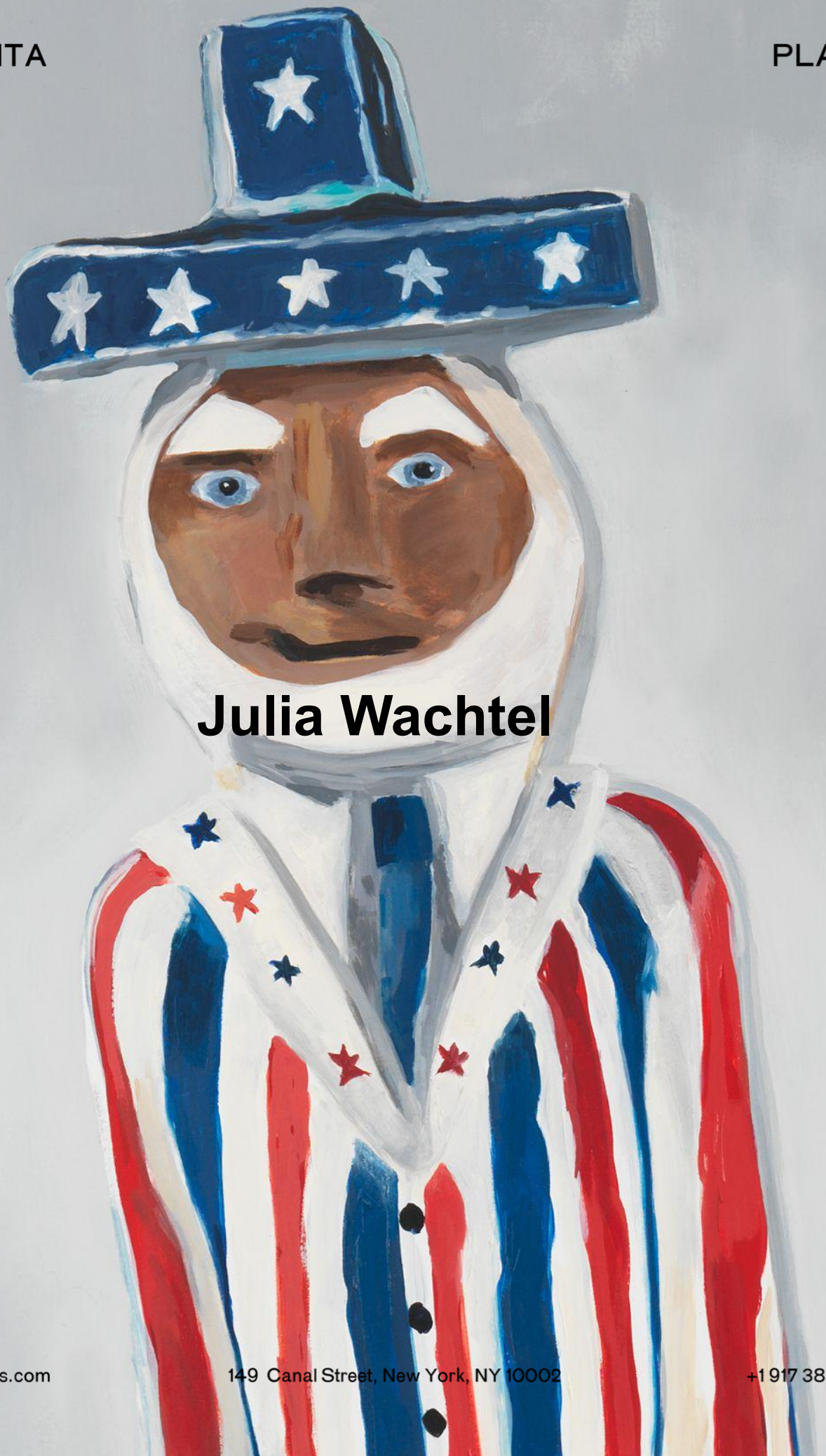
MUSLIMOVA: Me too, and I've actually tried to kill her off. But I don't really do it any more because I've accepted that me and her are in the factory forever. But I've been like, "Okay, I'm going to do a final drawing. Enough with her." And then I'm like, "Well, I should kill her off in the drawing, but I don't want to hurt her."

DUNHAM: Yeah, and you're really just coming to a point of repetition.

MUSLIMOVA: Yeah, but that's like hubris, thinking you have some sort of control. Like, "Oh, you think you could just walk away from this little dynamic?"

DUNHAM: I've gone through the whole cycle myself.

MAGENTA PLAINS



Julia Wachtel

Artist Biography

Born 1956, New York, NY
Lives and works in Bridgewater, CT

Julia Wachtel's oil, acrylic, and silkscreen-on-canvas paintings, which are drawn from popular culture, explore the impact of our image-saturated world. A figure of the Pictures Generation artists who emerged in early-1980's New York, Wachtel's early work mined posters of movie stars, pin-up girls, political figures, and pop music icons, as well as cartoon figures drawn from commercial greeting cards. Her current work primarily explores the vast space of the internet, a place of constantly replenishing images on a disorienting scale. Wachtel appropriates, juxtaposes and ultimately distills these images into concentrated paintings, shifting the original logic and proposing an examination of the emotional, political and aesthetic conditions of an image dominant world.

Selected exhibitions include MoMa, New York ;The Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. ; The Whitney Museum Of American Art ; Bergen Kunsthalle, Norway ; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis ; Le Consortium, France ; MAMCO, Geneva ; Migros Museum, Zurich ; Zabludowicz, London ; Cleveland Museum of Art ; ICA, London.

Julia's work can be found in institutions such as the MoMa, New York ; MOCA,Los Angeles ; The Whitney Museum of American Art ; FRAC Normandie ; Saatchi Collection, London ; Cleveland Museum of Art ; Brooklyn Museum ; Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels ; Zabludowicz Collection, London.

Julia Wachtel

Uncle Sam

Oil and acrylic on canvas with screen printed panels and hand painted oil panels

54 x 61 in.

Julia Wachtel | Select Exhibitions 2024

Thirsty for Myself
Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA

Julia Wachtel | Select Exhibitions 2022

Julia Wachtel
Musée d'art moderne et contemporain (MAMCO), Geneva, CH

Julia Wachtel | Select Exhibitions 2021

The Sum of All Parts
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, NY

The New York Times
April 6, 2022

The New York Times

Art We Saw This Spring

From our critics, reviews of closed gallery shows around New York City.

LITTLE ITALY

Julia Wachtel

Through June 4. Helena Anrather, 132 Bowery, Manhattan. 917-355-7724; helenaanrather.com.

Julia Wachtel's "Duck" (2021) at Helena Anrather. Julia Wachtel and Helena Anrather; Etienne Frossard

There's an enormous picture window at one end of Helena Anrather's new gallery space, three panes of glass joined, or divided, by thin white epoxy seams. It looks over a block on which at least three different versions of the Bowery — one in Chinatown, one dotted with luxury hotels, and one in the old lighting fixtures district — are all jammed together.

It's the perfect setting for six new paintings by Julia Wachtel. These landscape-oriented pieces, each made of as many as five separate panels placed edge to edge, juxtapose silk-screened found photographs of contemporary life with oversized hand-painted cartoon characters. In "Fulfillment," the piece that gives the show its title, a photograph of an endlessly receding Amazon warehouse is placed beside a cartoon reindeer with piercing blue eyes. In "Duck," a shot of the heavily bearded cast of the reality TV series "Duck Dynasty" is interrupted by a jauntily marching Donald Duck.

At first, the cartoons just come off as comments on the photos. The reindeer is an ironic nod to the cheery mascot that hides every dystopian corporate reality; Donald brings some levity to the weirdly serious "Duck Dynasty" cast. But the characters are so crisp and straightforward next to the fuzzy, ambiguous photographs that they slowly begin to read as an alternate reality, one in which America's disintegrating public discourse is replaced by the narrow but reliable certainties of art. Whether you find that comforting or unnerving depends on which side you're looking at.
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