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Hannah Levy

Crutch

Hannah Levy (b. 1991, New York) presents *Crutch*, an exhibition of new wall-based and freestanding sculptures that exist as extensions of the body. Absorbed in the material encounter of two seemingly opposing mediums, Levy introduces glass into her practice. A mix of traditional and experimental processes are used to alter, slump, swell and sag the glass as it submits to its metal opponent. Concentrating her source material—which spans vegetables, medical equipment, prosthetics, and furniture—on forms that implicate mobility aids, Levy considers our physical and psychological relationships to our built environment. The works function like prophecies: they are symbols of the shared anxieties of our bodily condition, acknowledging the universal yet unspoken truth that we are fallible and impermanent.

A series of unique steel railings line the walls of the exhibition, inviting support while remaining untouchable. Thorns punctuate the rails' sinuous curves, poised to pierce the hands that seek to bear their weight. Rather than aid, they deter, seemingly warning viewers of their own frailty. Other barbs cradle deflated, multi-hued glass casts of gourds, a reoccurring motif that is rendered with blown glass for the first time. Akin to diseased, flaccid flesh, the glass gourds sag over each rail like fruit on a vine, deflating as they rot.

Merging Modernism's minimalist lines with Art Nouveau's ornamental architecture and natural references, Levy plays with two schools of thought that clash over form versus function. Hector Guimard (1867-1942), a prominent Art Nouveau architect and designer who is best known for designing the iconic cast-iron entrances to Paris' underground subway system, distinguished by serpentine arches, serves as a precedent for Levy's sculptures. The repetition of Guimard's curves throughout the French capital was realized when he offered his designs via catalog to other architects and developers who aimed to emulate his aesthetic sensibility, ultimately earning him the admiration of modernists. Incorporating today's technologies to enable the modularity of organic forms, Levy's unique sculptures exist as evolutions of her hand-crafted practice rooted in metal.

In a freestanding sculpture that models a chair, the artist employs slumped glass (a process that uses gravity and heat from a kiln to shape sheet-glass using a mold.) Bulbous caged glass objects hang from curved armatures that suggest lifts often used to transfer patients between beds and chairs. Here, these supportive apparatuses are rendered unusable, absurdly modified by replacing the expected sling of the 'lifts' with glass and stainless steel. The imprisoned glass of the caged style cites Venetian lighting fixtures from the late 18th century, suspended from the stem-like lamp post at an unusual height that encroaches on our ability to pass underneath. Like a drooping flower bud, the work's silhouette echoes the organic lines of our natural world.

Two unique sets of polished stainless-steel sculptures resemble stilts. Constructed using a modular ball and socket joint system, the carved talons are newly articulated and robust, updated from Levy's earlier iterations of the same kind. They resemble the feet of a bird of prey, a brutal interpretation of the clawfoot supports of freestanding bathtubs that gained popularity around the turn of the 20th century. Levy's references for the 'shoe' of the sculpture lie in high fashion stilettos, with pointed metal toe boxes that incite a tactile memory of soft tissue squeezed into a too-tight shoe. A gold-plated spur sits menacingly at the imagined wearer's ankle, accentuating the shoe's preexisting relationship to pain and opulence. Existing outside of the latent bodily anxieties accessed by other works in *Crutch*, the twin structures present a haze of interpretation. One could reexperience the exhibition by concluding the other works serve to support the unsteady wearers of

the otherworldly stilts. In either case, Levy's objects exist as both body and bodily support structure, absurdly complicating our corporeal consciousness.