

# Hannah Levy

## Bulge

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**MASSIMODECARLO is delighted to announce *Bulge*, American artist Hannah Levy's debut solo exhibition with the gallery and in London. Levy's metal, glass, and silicone sculptures are like forbidden fruits, tempting the viewer as danger looms. Reminiscent of home or office furniture, hardware, prosthetics, as well as human flesh and food, the works expose a latent anxiety as function is removed from form, revealing themselves to be uncanny and otherworldly.**

Drawing from the gallery's architecture, dating back to 1723, Levy leans into and pushes against the space's decorative accents and historically preserved green-painted walls. Tripod-legged, bulbous humanoids, glass wall sconces punctured by steel claws, and anthropomorphic furniture-like forms are both unearthly and naturally in situ within a surreal site of domesticity (further realized by Levy's inclusion of a matching green carpet).

Since 2022, Levy's sculptures have taken on a new dimension with the integration of glass. The artist twists and molds the material into lumpy or scrunched shapes that droop over and burst from their polished metal confines. Standing erect in the center of the gallery, a mutant insect or perhaps alien visitor emerges from glass and steel. The lurching, larvae-like structure engages a technique drawn from late 18<sup>th</sup> century Venetian lighting fixtures. Glass is cautiously blown through a stainless-steel cage, its hot surface pressed through the gaps in the metal to achieve a distended appearance. On the walls, a series of stainless-steel claws are installed like Art Nouveau sconces. Each talon appears to squeeze a swollen orb of blown glass, imbuing the fixtures with eerie sensuality.

Grinding and welding metal by hand until the structures assume their corporeal forms, Levy humorously adapts traditional processes to her needs, creating new methods that capture her unique blend of the familiar and the menacing. A sculpture resembling a distorted Modernist chair perches on extended spiky legs. Silicone is stretched over the steel structure like taut flesh, blurring the lines between human and object. In another silicone and stainless-steel work, a spider-like structure takes on the formal qualities of a midcentury ottoman. A

stretched silicone sheath centers the arachnid work in a reoccurring sentiment of fear and arousal inviting comparison to Louise Bourgeois' iconic *Maman*, similarly delving into the realm of zoomorphic forms with playful intentions.

As the gallery pulses with a residential ambience that belies its poisonous inhabitants, a droopy silicone asparagus enlarged many times over is perched in the window of 55 South Audley Street. Two hand-carved stainless-steel claws fixed to the wall grasp the rubbery vegetable as it lays flaccid. Function becomes an illusion, leaving each form suspended in what the artist often refers to as a "design purgatory" - a limbo state of in-between, *bulging* with potential.

### **Hannah Levy**

Hannah Levy was born in New York City, USA in 1991. She currently lives and works in New York.

With spare gestures and skilled execution, Levy manipulates texturally incongruous materials, such as silicone, glass, stone, and polished metal, to create tactile sculptures that provoke sensory experience. The artist appropriates commonplace objects and defamiliarizes them by using unexpected materials and warping their formal properties.

Stretched flesh-like expanses of silicone are held taught or perched precariously on rigid armatures, zoomorphic forms that invite comparison to insect legs, household fixtures, clothing, and exercise equipment. Levy's recent addition of glass into her material lexicon continues her exploration of the material encounter of two seemingly opposing mediums. A mix of traditional and experimental processes are used to alter, slump, swell and sag the glass as it submits to its metal opponent. Levy makes that which is familiar, deeply strange and magnetic, creating objects that exist in a fleeting limbo of what the artist calls "design purgatory."

Matching the allusions of 20<sup>th</sup> century design with fleshy casts, the artist imbues the modernist ideal of immaculate geometry with a jarring return to organic matter, accentuating the pre-existing sensuality hidden in modern design. While her linear, metallic forms draw our attention to the subtle details of construction that mark the mid-century aesthetic, their skin-like sheaths resist this comparison, confusing the separation between living and dead, animal and prosthetic. Levy's work is indebted to the Surrealist fascination with the uncanny and the abject while taking a retrospective and ambivalent view on the material culture of the past century.

Hannah Levy received a BFA from Cornell University in Ithaca, NY (2013), and a Meisterschüler title from Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main, Germany (2015). With recent institutional solo exhibitions at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), CA (2022) and the Arts Club of Chicago, IL (2021), the artist has been included in exhibitions at CCS Bard Hessel Museum, Annandale-on-

Hudson, NY; the Rennie Museum, Vancouver, Canada; the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT; MoMA PS1, New York, NY; among others, and was invited to participate in the 59th Venice Biennale (2022) and the 16th Lyon Biennale of Contemporary Art (2022). Levy's work is included in public collections including the Nevada Museum of Art; Reno, NV, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; the Philara Foundation, Dusseldorf, Germany; and the G2 Kunsthalle, Leipzig, Germany.