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Hannah Levy
Frieze New York
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For Frieze New York 2025, Casey Kaplan presents a solo stand of new freestanding and wall-based sculptures by Hannah Levy (b. 1991, New York, NY.)

A visceral moment of stretching or squishing is the impetus of each of Levy's objects; the clash between materials with opposing tactile qualities informs the sculpture's final form. In this new body of work, encounters are frozen in time as glass cools and hardens after being blown or slumped against stainless steel. Sensuous indentations form where the glass yields to grasping claws or cage-like armatures, which both support and contain the glass's corporeal swell and sag.

Building on the energy initiated by the interplay between glass and metal, the five forms within the presentation negotiate between organic fluidity and engineered austerity, each responding to distinct tenets of Art Nouveau and Modernist design. Wall-based, multi-armed structures reference the Art Nouveau tradition of translating natural forms into metal, a mode the artist draws from early 20th-century jewelry and home furnishings. Rather than the ornamental vines or blooms as seen in Art Nouveau broaches and wall sconces, Levy's steel fixtures allude to a dangerous sentience. Sinuous lines end in sharp talons that grip orbs of blown glass that appear full and ripe, squeezed to the brink of rupture. The menacing, animalistic quality of the claws and the angular baseplate that anchors them to the wall is tempered by soothing symmetry and meticulous craftsmanship.

The freestanding works balance on delicate, insect-like legs that taper to a sharp point. Their minimalist curves echo Modernist furniture designers, such as Charlotte Perriand (1903-1999) and Eileen Gray (1878-1976) while their overall shapes recall pragmatic furniture like bassinets or chairs, albeit at an inoperable scale. Their centers, or seats, are made of opulent slumped glass (a process that uses gravity and heat from a kiln to shape sheet-glass using a mold), tainting any lingering expectations of practical use and complicating the Modernist emphasis on simplicity and function.

The dissonance or unease created by the couplings and conflicts within the sculptures are central to the work's existence. Their tensions simulate the anxieties inherent in our own bodies. Seeking out the viewer's gut feelings of arousal or repulsion—and celebrating the point at which they merge—the absurd appeal of Levy's practice infects the built environment with suspense, questioning our traditions of taste-making.