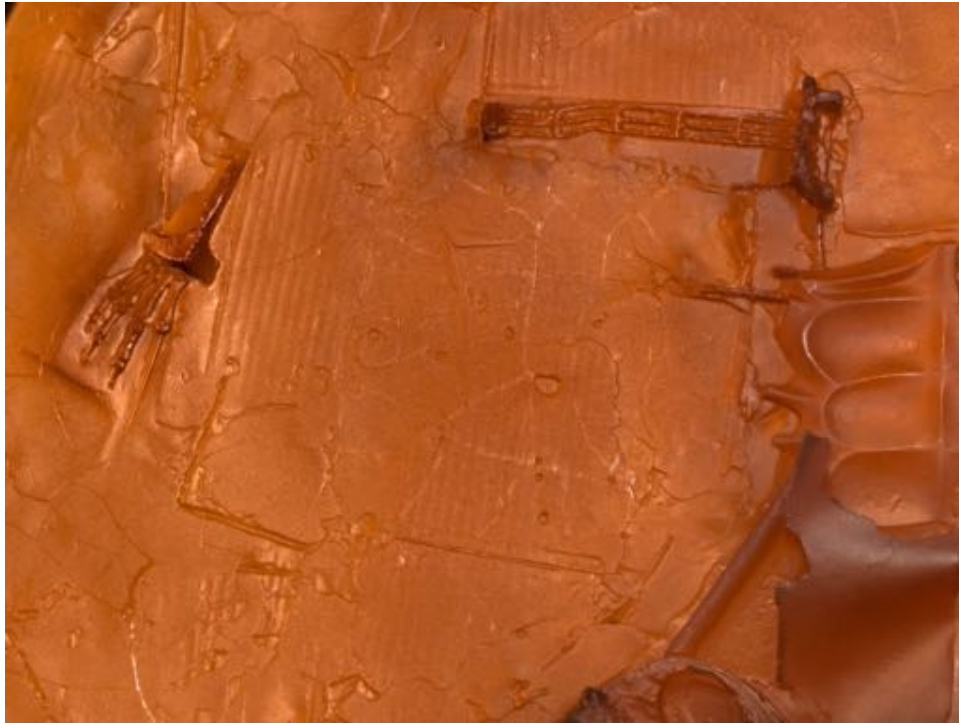


Andra Ursuța
Retina Turner

September 10–October 18, 2025
537 West 20th Street, New York



Andra Ursuța, *Private Dancer (Amber)*, 2025 (detail)
© Andra Ursuța. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner, New York

Andra Ursuța's Retina Turner stages vision at the edge of exhaustion. Presented in the artist's first exhibition at David Zwirner's New York gallery, the new body of work comprises sixteen monumental, egg-shaped slabs of cast glass. Each slab contains spectral presences—Private Dancers, human-machine hybrids who glide, stutter, or dissolve beneath crystalline surfaces. Hypnotic and elusive, they perform the instability of sight in a moment when looking has become retinal apathy, overburdened and hollowed out.

Never in history has humanity produced more images, or made more of the world visible faster. Everything can be shown, easily and instantly. Yet this saturation has not led to clarity. Instead, vision has become diffuse, repetitive, exhausted—a glut of images that occludes the very possibility of the visionary. Ursuța's Private Dancers dwell precisely here, in the gap between the infinite production of images and a faltering, rolling eye.

The slabs' ovoid forms evoke astigmatic eyes deformed by pathology. Some are cast in lead crystal, exposing fossils trapped inside. Others are made of murrine glass, an ancient technique in which colored rods are fused and sliced to reveal patterned cross-sections. In these works, the murrine produces dense papillary fields that echo the sudden proliferation of dots across vision at the moment of a retinal tear. Each figure appears in both translucent and opaque aspects, as if vision were oscillating between clarity and obscurity. These entoptic specters are embodied floaters, phosphenes, and drifting flashes that belong to the eye rather than the external world. They are assembled from fragments—anthropomorphically reconstituted studio flotsam, improvised bodies, visual snow that drifts across the field of sight. In these monumentalized fragments, what remains to be seen is not the spectacle outside but the noise within. The unspeakable can only be shown—not through representations of the world, already stripped bare, but through training the eye onto itself.

This inward turn connects Ursuța's dancers to the origins of visual art. In prehistoric caves, depictions of animals were interlaced with grids, spirals, and dots—hallucinations produced in the darkened chamber of the eye. These earliest images fused representation with perception's internal dream. Ursuța renews this conjunction for a culture oversaturated with visibility: her Private Dancers are both figures and phantoms, projections of an eye that has turned inward.

Ursuța's sculptures are an epilogue to Lucio Fontana's La Fine di Dio paintings—the end of The End of God. In the 1960s, Fontana punctured egg-shaped canvases to open painting up to infinity, a gesture of optimism in an era of space exploration. Ursuța retains the cosmic oval but inverts its meaning: where Fontana sought expansion, she shows implosion. Her panels are sealed worlds of vitreous black humor, resonating not with visions of the beyond but with the static of the image-world. They announce a culture that has retreated from the horizon of collective imagination into an endless circulation of dazzling but empty images. Anchored on concrete pedestals reminiscent of Italian Futurist Antonio Sant'Elia's visionary architecture, and supported by mounting hardware that echoes Austrian architect Walter Pichler's machine forms, Ursuța's precariously balanced relics eulogize vision in a world that can only show more and more but sees less and less. They commemorate not utopia but its failure.

Retina Turner asks what it means to look when looking has become compulsive, when everything has already been made visible. Ursuța's Private Dancers do not provide clarity; they flicker at the edge of legibility, half-formed, half-dissolved. They suggest that vision is not a matter of revelation but of haunting, not the discovery of the new but the recycling of perceptual debris. In their opacity, these works press a troubling truth: in an age flooded with images, the only visions left to us are the ones that arise when sight begins to fail.

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