

Vanille brings together sculptural works by artists Nicolas Deshayes and George Henry Longly that explore frameworks of taste and desire in domestic and public settings. The choice of “vanilla” as the exhibition’s title invokes a tongue-in-cheek sense of “taste” as both aesthetic judgment and a flavor. Considered an exotic spice in Europe until the 19th century due to the difficulty of importing it from Central and South America, vanilla (derived from the same etymological root as vagina) is now ubiquitously used as a warm, gooey, comforting note at the heart of sweets. In colloquial terms, “vanilla” is a pejorative reference to normative behaviors, especially sexual propriety. The works in *Vanille* approach the materials of advertising display, public information and urban design with a subversive yet oblique touch. From the playful twisting of signifiers and liberal use of stylized motifs to hinting at the psychosexual underbelly of public life, Deshayes and Longly whet the appetite for tastes beyond pure vanilla.

Nicolas Deshayes contributes two bodies of works to the exhibition. *Salts* is a modular installation consisting of vacuum-formed plastic reliefs that represent liquids in states of flux on a backdrop of zinc-plated steel panels. The vacuum forming process is normally used for prototyping and packaging purposes. Here the sagging materiality of the forms takes its cue from alluring advertising imagery of foodstuff and beauty products whilst also suggesting a corrosive threat. While these panels relate to the aseptic, hygienic surfaces of public toilets or bureaucratic offices, the acidic iridescence of the zinc plating and the amorphous, corporeal vacuum-forms insistently point to the impressions of the body. Behind the vacuum forms, the steel panels suggest a functional backdrop for unspoken actions of everyday life. Elsewhere, the edges of the exhibition space are punctuated by black rubber sculptures that appear like unrolled sheet material. The flatness of the mats are spoiled by clusters of anonymous boot prints that emerge from their surface. This dark, mud-like surface intimates psychologically charged encounters fraught with sexual tension and abjection, darker than *Vanille* suggests.

George Henry Longly includes works that consider the modules of display. *Haven't we met? Of course we have* are two banners positioned near the front of the space that take their cues from conference design and public advertising spots. The banner’s photographic images were taken in the summer during an artist residency at Schloss Balmoral in the German Rhineland. Devoid of meaning outside of the exhibition context, the works draw from lifestyle or tourist photography, both in terms of content and composition. These works “brand” the exhibition and its artists while resisting a biographical read. *Thinking and dancing* pays homage to the public information board. As performative objects whose contents could (conceivably) change throughout the exhibition’s run, the boards’ motifs draw from histories of the decorative arts. Finally, Longly includes three upright sculptures that combine the vocabulary of domestic appliances and modernist techniques. The polished objects have the scale of department store displays; combining textures such as marble, glass and plaster, they hold beauty supplies and home design objects. With a palette firmly in the realm of *décor*, the works anchor the artist’s interest in sully modernist purity with charged references to now-passé aesthetics of postmodern design and domestic interiors.

Nicolas Deshayes was born in Nancy, France and lives and works in London.

George Henry Longly was born in the UK and lives and works in London and Margate.

Wendy Vogel

Wendy Vogel is a critic and curator. Her writing has been featured in publications such

as Artforum.com, *Art Lies* and *Pastelegram*. She has been a contributor and Editor at *Flash Art International* and *...might be good*. She has worked on curatorial projects in venues such as the Künstlerhaus Schloss Balmoral, PERFORMA and the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College.

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