



WHITE FLAG LIBRARY

*Hannah Levy*

September 17 – October 29, 2016

Marie Heilich. You seem to have a penchant for perverting the old “form follows function” rule of design. Would you agree?

Hannah Levy. Yes, I’m borrowing the formal language of highly designed objects but they’re used in a context where they don’t make sense, or maybe we’re made unfamiliar with the function. In this way the form becomes more apparent because it indicates an absurd function that raises questions – the work can get quite kinky.

MH. You use steel armatures and tinted silicone in the White Flag Library exhibition and in many of your works. The finished objects are so strange yet you don’t stray far from the materials’ common purposes; you manipulate the steel rods with the logic and flare of a furniture designer, and you use the same techniques of makeup artists for the silicone vegetables, bodies parts, and hybrids of organic matter.

HL. I started getting into fruits and vegetables when I was looking at systems of display and food seemed to always engage with systems of display in a very synthetic way. Like how all of the stems get lined up and ugly fruits get hidden. I’ve been working with asparagus for a long time. I like it because its original size is so digit-like but if you change the size or color they become even more like appendages — I’m working on some now that are arm sized. But I think mostly my attraction to the asparagus comes from its creepy symptom – that it makes your pee smell weird.

With the steel structures, they’re a combination of forms like gym equipment, medical equipment, furniture, etc. I think the curves that I use in the metal pieces and with Plexi make fun of the way curves exist in contemporary design. A lot of signage and handrails have those curves. Someone made the decision to put a bit of sexiness into a rail and I like to push that to a point of humor, make it more apparent.

MH. The material not only interacts but becomes interdependent. I’m thinking of your work that resembles a steel highchair with a beige inner tube tightly wrapped around - one material isn’t dominant, there’s interplay.

HL. This tension of two materials, to strain against each other, is a very basic sculptural strategy, and its one that I love to play with. Although they are often pulling or pushing against each other, I like to try give the conflicting forms a similar affect. Sometimes you’re cupping or holding and sometimes materials turn against each other and can be stretched in a way that’s kind of violent. When you’re working with silicone every pinch, every stretch, you can feel looking at it - that consistency is part of you.

MH. There are shades of dirty pink that show up in your work often. This color has been used aggressively in the past few years to market to a specific female consumer; the sweet-heart feminist that can critique and own her Barbie pink dream world.

HL. Yes, I’m definitely attracted to that color, but also skeptical of it. I started working with pink and beige when I was working with pleather. I was interested in beige because it’s ubiquitous in American interior spaces; beige walls, beige couch, beige carpet, everything beige. I think that color is pretty sinister so I find it interesting to blend this “sad causation beige” with a “lollypop sex-toy pink”. The ubiquity of both colors says something really sinister about America’s relationship to whiteness.