

Artist Hannah Levy often uses the term "design purgatory" to describe the sculptures she produces (see page 44). Nodding towards M  ret Oppenheim's Surrealist *Traccia* table from 1939, her piece *Untitled* (2017) seems to be clawing itself out of functionality into a realm of dreamlike, sculptural animation, a hybrid creature on the brink of emancipation. The slender, slightly sensual silicone body struts forward on steel talons, inviting us to consider the desire inherent in inanimate things which have become objectified by their use.



HANNAH LEVY, *Untitled* (2017); Nickel-plated steel, silicone.
Image courtesy of the artist.



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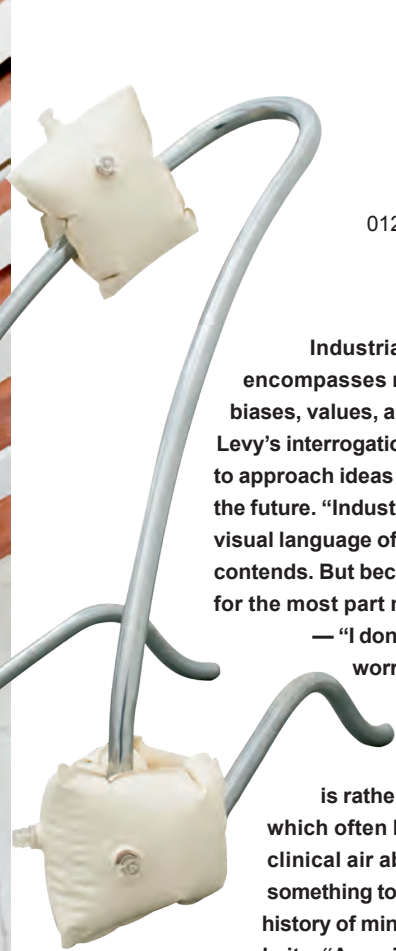
"It's fucked up, but the idea of some overweight white guy in khakis sitting on an overstuffed flesh-toned chair that's the same color and texture as his body — there's something quietly kinky about that!", declares artist Hannah Levy. Her chrome and silicone sculptures underscore the relationship between furniture and human beings, with so-called "neutrals" — beige, taupe, and light pink — showing up in her work time and again. "I think a lot about how specific bodies relate to tasteful interiors and what that means," explains the 27-year-old New York native. Levy's

sculptures tend to references several types of furniture at once,

but she recombines these familiar forms to create something new and totally absurd. Like hyper-designed minimalist homeware from an alternative dimension, her work leaves viewers scratching their heads about the functionality of the object at hand. "It looks like it has some specific use or purpose," she notes, "but not one that's quite placeable." She's taken to calling the liminal realm these objects seem destined for "design purgatory."



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Industrial design encompasses many of our biases, values, and aspirations, so Levy's interrogation of it allows her to approach ideas of race, class, and the future. "Industrial design is the visual language of our everyday," she contends. But because her work is for the most part not design objects — "I don't actually have to worry about them being able to hold a human body" — the end result is rather playful sculptures, which often have a slightly clinical air about them. "It has something to do with the history of minimalism," she admits. "As a visual strategy, paring things down really allows you to highlight or draw attention to certain subtleties," as well as to spotlight incongruous combinations — "I like the super synthetic paired with something that is considered 'classy,'" she confides. At her most recent solo



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- 009 Silicone and latex costumes by Hannah Levy; Choreography by Phoebe Berglund; Performed by Stormy Budwig, Jessica Cook, and Nikima Jagudajev at MoMA/PS1 as part of *Past Skin*, July 2017. Photo by Carly Gaebe.
- 010 *Untitled* (2016); Nickel-plated steel, silicone. 18 x 27.5 x 18 in.
- 011 Hannah Levy during the installation of her exhibition *Swamp Salad* at CLEARING, Brooklyn. Portrait by Sean Santiago for PIN-UP.
- 012 *Untitled* (2016); Handmade vinyl water wings, steel. 24 x 20 x 20 in.
- 013 *Untitled* (2017); Nickel-plated steel, silicone. 31.5 x 75 x 24 in. Photo by Anders Sune Berg.
- 014 *Untitled* (detail) (2017); Nickel-plated steel, silicone. 31.5 x 75 x 24 in. Photo by Anders Sune Berg.
- 015 *Non-slip Solutions* (2016); Cast epoxy, fiberglass, faux fur, nipple clamp, chain. 20.5 x 30 x 22 in.
- 016 *Untitled* (2016); Steel, silicone, plastic tub. 18 x 19 x 36.5 in.
- 017 Custom-made latex costumes for Nick Faust's 2016 performance *The Days Are Ahead* with Diamond Stingily at Feuer/Mesler, New York City.

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show, *Swamp Salad* at CLEARING in Brooklyn, Levy played with the luxury connotations of alabaster and pearls; she's also made latex costumes for dance performances by the likes of Nick Faust and Phoebe Berglund. "At the moment, I don't really have a different thinking period versus making period," continues Levy. "I think I'm most productive when I'm reading a text that I'm interested in but it's a little bit boring, and I drift off and let my mind wander. A lot of these theorists are doing backflips of logic and language. It's just a fun shape to think in." — WHITNEY MALLETT

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