

Hannah Levy

Retainer

April 2021 – March 2022

A High Line Commission

Location: On the High Line at 23rd St, New York City

Hannah Levy's largely anthropomorphic sculptures evoke the physicality of interacting with the built environment: lounging on chairs, leaning in doorways, or grasping a railing. With her work, she selects precise materials, forms, and colors to conjure these feelings. Levy reimagines modern furnishings and contemporary design tropes in fleshy cast silicone and nickel-plated steel, blurring boundaries between public exteriors and private interiors, and contrasts cold materials, such as steel and aluminum with organic forms. In one sculpture, an eight-foot, mustard-colored silicone asparagus droops between shining nickel-plated steel talons; in another, a jacket with impossibly long arms sags through elongated window bars; in a third, a cast gourd perches on a pair of bird legs. For Levy, paramount is the friction of physically interacting with our surroundings, which in turn sparks an awareness of our own materiality.

For the High Line, Levy makes an oversized orthodontic retainer from carved marble and stainless steel. The sculpture is the newest in her series of stone retainers—Levy hand-sculpted earlier iterations in alabaster; the version on the High Line was made at a marble quarry in Italy. The piece points to the strangeness of orthodontics and straight teeth as a marker of class, in part because of orthodontics' exorbitant price. The organic form of the cast mouth contrasts with its smooth metal bars, which conjures the feeling of the rigid form inside one's mouth and invites external structures inside one's own body. Levy's giant retainer is almost as tall as the park benches nearby, and the retainer wire is the size of the High Line's exterior railings, which sets the piece in conversation with the architecture and design of the park and its surroundings.

Artist bio

Hannah Levy (b. 1991, New York, New York) lives and works in New York, New York. Recent solo exhibitions include Casey Kaplan, New York (2020); mother's tankstation, Dublin, Ireland (2018); Fourteen30 Contemporary, Portland, Oregon (2017); and White Flag Projects Library, St. Louis, Missouri (2016). Notable group exhibitions include Wege zur Welt – Hildebrand Collection, G2 Kunsthalle, Leipzig (2019); Campi Magnetici (Magnetic Fields), Gió Marconi, Milan, Italy (2019); The Artist is Present, Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China (2018); I See You, Savannah College of Art and Design Museum, Savannah, Georgia (2018); Being There, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark (2017); Past Skin, MoMA PS1, New York, New York (2017); and Things I Think I Want. Six Positions of Contemporary Art, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, Germany (2017).

Support

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