

Hannah Levy
The Dreamers
58th October Salon | Belgrade Biennial 2020
Belgrade City Museum

Born in 1991

Levy manipulates texturally incongruous materials, such as silicone and metal, to create tactile sculptures that provoke sensory experience. Rather than fetishizing synthetic substances, her work accentuates a pre-existing sensuality hidden in modern design. Fleshlike silicone is stretched over sleek, nickel-plated steel, or cast in plump, organic forms that rest precariously on metal armatures. Her references are wide-ranging and often anthropomorphic, both sterile and erotic, amusing and disturbing. The scale of recognizable, quotidian objects is often distorted to the point of absurdity, culminating in uncanny configurations that forgo their original functionality. The work's humor is belied by a latent anxiety, situating the sculptures in a seduction-repulsion loop. Frequently realized in anemic palettes of beige, pale green, translucent whites, and putrid pinks, Levy's works subvert notions of 'taste making' and the ways in which our designed environments reflect larger systems of value. Each component exists as a potential object to be consumed, in a perverse metabolic cycle that questions the very nature of consumption – both biologic and cultural. The material paradox in Levy's work is exemplified in her presentation in the 58th October Salon, especially as it applies to the pearl, a commodity associated with affluence despite its mass production. Levy's installation is oriented around a video featuring long natural nails massaging the fleshy interiors of giant oysters extracting pearls one at a time from their soft bellies. The audience to this almost pornographic exploration is a set of too-small lounge chairs featuring stretched gridded silicone dotted in pearls based on an unrealized design by the late French designer Charlotte Perriand. Cold shining pearls emerge from the soft fleshy interiors of oysters, hard long nails grow from unworked hangs, and soft silicone clings to polished modernist steel skeletons. There is a continuing through line of cool hardness rubbing up against soft flesh, the textural incongruity of the melting of a surrealist dream.