

M+B

Art in America

BODY IMAGE: NEW SCULPTURE AT VARIOUS SMALL FIRES

By Liz Hirsh
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Alison Veit's *January* (2019) is one of the first pieces to greet visitors to "Psychosomatic," a summer group exhibition curated by Los Angeles artist Isabel Yellin. The 2019 work is a mirror, or more accurately, two reflective surfaces in a frame of Hydro-Stone and sand in the shape of a figure eight. It hangs outside on a courtyard wall, and to see one's face reflected in one of the mirrors is not to see it in the other, a trick that recalls Félix González-Torres's mirror pairings. It's a handsome execution of a simple concept, repurposed as a symbol for an exhibition ruminating on misalignments of the body and psyche.

Several artworks in the exhibition explicitly depict the human figure, though in bits and fragments. The semi-carved block of alabaster in Nevine Mahmoud's untitled tabletop sculpture (2021) has the smooth contours of a bare bottom. It evokes a classical nude study, but in a display of textural diversity, the stone rests atop a colorful laminate block. These mismatched materials are positioned on an unfinished wooden table. Amanda Ross-Ho's *Untitled Crisis Actor (HURTS WORST 2)*, 2019, hangs nearby, a circular tapestry embroidered with a cartoon sad face taken from a clinical pain scale. Yellin's own wall-mounted sculpture, *Gut Feeling* (2021), gathers stuffed fabric tubes like an intestinal tract that weaves through a steel and fiberglass armature. The artist combines organic forms and inorganic materials to eerie effect. In Alison Saar's *Still Run Dry* (2012), glass vials shaped like organs—intestines, the stomach, the heart, lungs, and a uterus—connected by copper and rubber tubing spread across the wall in a slightly sinister, post-human object theater.

Other works are dedicated to intimate and uncanny associations with the home. A delicate 3D-printed chair sculpture by Dwyer Kilcollin, *Emergent Object: Chair IX* (2015), almost appears to melt, as though assembled from sand and now returning to its earthen source. Anne Libby's untitled sculpture of polished aluminum (2021) resembles Venetian blinds pulled to one side and frozen there. The metallic finish and dramatic angle render this quotidian home furnishing sharp and menacing. Kristen Morgin also refers to the household in unfired clay sculptures of mundane items like children's books (*The Velveteen Rabbit*) and a worn DVD case for the action romcom *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*. Trulee Hall's kinetic *Humping Corn and Other Phallic Veg* (2021) also features trompe l'oeil elements, fake ceramic vegetables both found and of her own making. The most overtly sexual piece in the exhibition, this installation suspends the sculptures within it, mostly ears of corn, from a motorized armature that makes them thrust back and forth.

Taken as a whole, "Psychosomatic" models the ways in which artists and viewers alike might use art to measure our sense of self, considering variable states of physical, mental, and sexual wellness. Coming on the heels of our tentative emergence from the apparent worst of the Covid-19 pandemic and quarantine, the show felt like a hospitable if trepidatious welcome into a new and different world.