

A photograph of a woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt and dark pants, sitting on a stool in a bright room. She is looking out a window to her right. The image is framed by a dark, irregular shape.

The Artsy  
VANGUARD  
2019

GENESIS  
BELANGER

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# THE ARTISTS TO KNOW RIGHT NOW

Artsy Editors Sep 16, 2019 2:42pm

Videos by Alex John Beck  
Video Editing by Nate DeYoung  
Interaction Design by Wax Studios

The landscape of contemporary art is ever-changing. It shifts according to countless factors, from artists' principles and the political climate to auction records and collectors' tastes. Nevertheless, each year, a new crop of ambitious artists stands out. They catapult from obscurity to ubiquity, earn representation from top galleries, garner interest from prominent collectors, and pack their schedules with exhibitions. Most importantly, they make work that expands our understanding of what art can be.

The Artsy Vanguard 2019 features 50 artists, hailing from 27 countries and working in 27 cities around the world. Ranging in age from 28 to 93, they pursue painting, sculpture, photography, filmmaking, and performance, as well as investigative research and virtual reality. They delve into topics from human rights violations to youth culture, and capture the attention of powerhouse collectors and celebrity royalty, like Beyoncé.

*Artsy* editors developed this list from a pool of 600 artists who were nominated by more than 100 curators, collectors, and art-world professionals. These artists represent three distinct career stages, which we've arranged into the following categories: Emerging, which introduces artists who recently started showing at leading institutions and galleries; Newly Established, which presents the artists making noise at major art events

and gaining representation with influential galleries; and *Getting Their Due*, which recognizes artists who have worked persistently for decades, yet have only recently received the spotlight they deserve. The Artsy Vanguard highlights the artists paving the future of art *right now*.

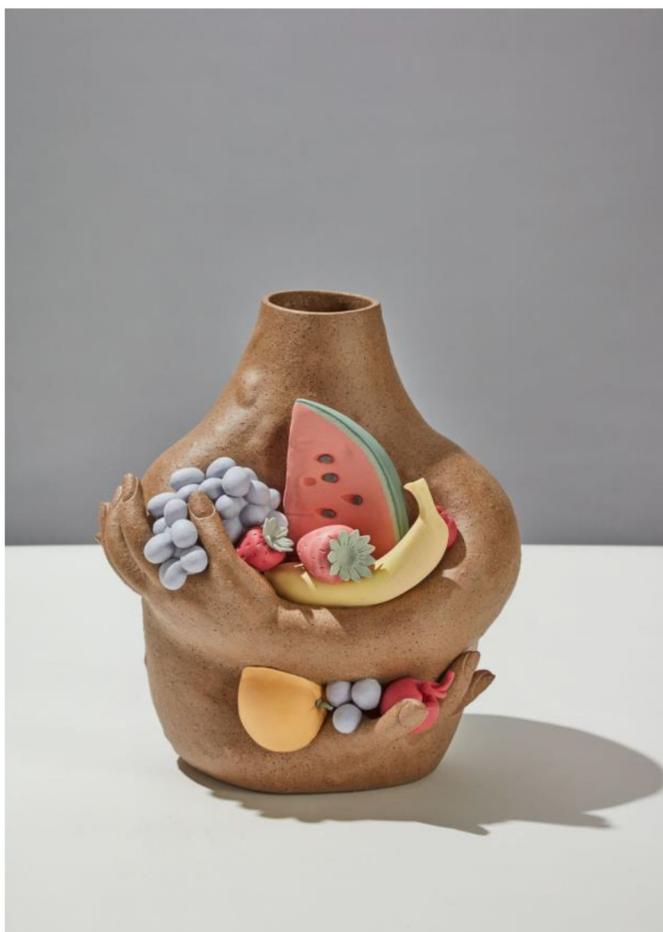
[...]

# Genesis Belanger

B. 1978, United States. Lives and works in New York.



Genesis Belanger in her New York studio by Alex John Beck for Artsy.



Genesis Belanger, *Full Embrace*, 2018. Photo by Pauline Shapiro. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

Genesis Belanger charmed the New York art world in the fall of 2017 with her small-but-mighty show of otherworldly ceramic foodstuffs, cigarettes, and fingers at Mrs. Gallery. Her ceramics—with lush pastel hues, matte surfaces, trompe l’oeil aesthetics, and finely hewn details—transcend the typical clay-and-glaze constructions we expect from the medium.

Recently, these enticing sculptures earned the artist a presentation in the New Museum’s storefront window and representation by three esteemed galleries: Perrotin, Rodolphe Janssen, and François Ghebaly. Plus, she’ll have a solo show at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in 2020.

New Museum curator Margot Norton remarked on Belanger’s ability to “cull the uncanny from the everyday, while walking a striking balance between seduction and disquiet.” In a recent show with Emily Mae Smith at Perrotin’s Lower East Side gallery, a bouquet of flowers perched on a chaise lounge turned from lovely to eerie upon close inspection—three pairs of pure white fingers protruded from clusters of bubblegum-pink blossoms.



Genesis Belanger, *Breakfast in Bed*, 2019. Photo by Pauline Shapiro. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Genesis Belanger, *One For Me and One For My Friend* (detail), 2019. Photo by Pauline Shapiro. Courtesy of the artist and François Ghebaly, Los Angeles.

While tackling “pertinent subjects such as mass production, chemical dependency, and the absurdity of the patriarchy,” Norton noted, Belanger draws upon the art-historical traditions of Pop art, Surrealism, and 17th-century Dutch *vanitas* paintings. She also captivates us with nods to contemporary American culture—“particularly,” Norton added, “those that we consume to overcome daily stresses, yet also trap us in a liminal state, such as fast-food items, pill packets, liquor bottles, and cigarettes.”



Genesis Belanger, *Double Standard*, 2018. Photo by Pauline Shapiro.  
Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Installation view of “Genesis Belanger: Holding Pattern,” at the New Museum, New York, 2019.  
Photo by Charles Benton. Courtesy of the New Museum.



Installation view of Genesis Belanger, *Daily Adoration*, 2018, in “A Strange Relative,” at Perrotin New York, 2018. Photo by Pauline Shapiro. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Installation view of “Coins for the Ferryman,” 2019, at Francois Ghebaly, Los Angeles.  
Photo by Ian Gambers-Byer. Courtesy of the artist and Francois Ghebaly.



Installation view of “Holding Pattern,” 2019, at the New Museum, New York.  
Courtesy of the artist.

## ARTILLERY



## CANDICE LIN; GENESIS BELANGER

by Annabel Osberg

Tandem shows by Candice Lin and Genesis Belanger divide François Ghebaly into two curious realms as materially engaging as they are thought-provoking. Each artist's work is replete with backstories of historical and anthropological purport. Incorporating weaving, poetry, automatic translators and symbolic substances gleaned from a variety of medicinal and poisonous plants, Lin's installation addresses topics relating to migration and forced labor of Chinese diaspora. *La Charada China (Tobacco Version)* (2019) features a figure fashioned of tobacco leaves, lying prostrate as on a dissection table and beset by incursions including a tiny pamphlet about mutilation of Chinese laborers' corpses in Cuba. A glass contraption on the figure's abdomen distills a tincture of tobacco, sugar, poppy, tea and urine into tubes snaking across walls and rafters. Harboring other objects of intrigue, a hypnotic magenta hallway leads to the tubes'

conclusion in the installation's eerie final room where the tincture drips over a white tile platform and disappears into a drain as though it never had a purpose. Suffused with a different flavor of unease, Belanger's installation (detail pictured above) embodies a surreal institutional world stocked with ceramic foods, decor, office supplies and beauty products appearing to have fallen out of some elegantly drawn cartoon gone horribly awry. Manicured fingers become hairbrush bristles and lamps bear lips forced into smiles, questioning ideals of beauty and domesticity. Nearby, the outward face of Lin's barbed wire fence harbors more surprises and an alternate view.

Osberg, Annabel "Candice Lin; Genesis Belanger," *Artillery*, June 05 2019.  
<https://artillerymag.com/candice-lin-genesis-belanger/>

**Los Angeles Times**

## The hairbrush made of fingers and other scenes from the mind of Genesis Belanger



"Big Sleep" by Genesis Belanger, 2019. Stoneware and porcelain, ash, cotton ticking, foam, 45 inches by 60 inches by 23 inches. (Ian Byers-Gamber / From Genesis Belanger and Francois Ghebaly)

Genesis Belanger's entire show at the gallery François Ghebaly could consist of the sculpture "One for Me and One for My Friend," and it would suffice as an enthralling experience. But there's more, much more, in this first L.A. solo presentation, and all of it is just as beguiling.

The round, skirted table of "One for Me" holds about 20 objects made in porcelain and stoneware, all of them straddling the line that divides ordinary from strange, real from surreal. Appetizers might be expected on such a table, but not the little gray fish splayed across a saltine that Belanger has set down, nor the Ritz-like crackers topped with vaguely scatological pinkish dollops plugged by pimento-stuffed olives.



"One for Me and One for My Friend" by Genesis Belanger, 2019. Porcelain, stoneware, wood, powder-coated steel, cotton blend, 48 inches by 43 inches by 43 inches. (Pauline Shapiro / From Genesis Belanger and Francois Ghelaby)

There are also oversized burnt matches, their blackened ends curling abjectly, plus a pair of prescription bottles and several other larger vessels. The tip of a finger pokes out of one. A hot dog curves, suggestively, out of another. Little-Shop-of-Horrors-style blossoms sprout from a few others.

According to the press release, "One for Me" is part of an ensemble meant to evoke a wake. The neighboring sculptures in the room have a rich noirish feel (a woman's fingers peeking out from a curtain) and recall the dark symbolism common to fairy tales (a huge hairbrush with fingers as bristles, resting on a stack of bare mattresses).



"Reception" (detail) by Genesis Belanger, 2019. Stoneware, porcelain, wood, wool felt, 36 inches by 72 inches by 28 inches. (Ian Byers-Gamber / From Genesis Belanger and Francois Ghelaby)

As tableau, a more persuasive, affecting example is found in the next room. There, Belanger has set a reception desk and two couch-table combo pieces to conjure a waiting room. The furniture is covered in felt and supports clay sculptures that extrapolate on the mundane accoutrements of such a space. A tape dispenser unfurls a rippling pink tongue, a trio of uncapped pens droop flaccidly in their mug, and bitten chocolates expose centers soft and rosy.

If the uncanny were a language, it would be the Brooklyn-based Belanger's native tongue. She deftly defamiliarizes the familiar through scale, surface and context to render it disorienting — not threatening or unsettling to a Freudian degree, but highly curious.

She animates the inanimate and imbues the generic and functional with the electric current of the sexual. The surfaces of her objects are smooth, generalized, erased of particularity.



They occupy a narrow spectrum of flat browns, blues and greens common to public settings, falling under the palette category of washed-out institutional. Such understatement only serves to accentuate the sculptures' delicious peculiarity.

A bowl of overripe and partially eaten fruit in the waiting room nods to still-life painting's traditional invocations of mortality and sensuality, as well as its use as a vehicle for displays of exquisite technical skill. The disembodied female hand, with long slender fingers and polished nails, appears frequently in the work as surrogate for the entire body, bringing to mind the charged paintings of Chicago Imagist Christina Ramberg. Belanger's objects resonate like fetishes, and her spaces like stage sets in the theater of the unconscious.

"God's Bounty" (detail) by Genesis Belanger, 2019. Porcelain, stoneware (Pauline Shapiro / From Genesis Belanger and Francois Ghelaby)



"Waiting-Room" (detail) by Genesis Belanger, 2019 (Ian Byers-Gamber / From Genesis Belanger and Francois Ghelaby)

Ollman, Leah, "The Hairbrush Made of Fingers and Other Scenes from the Mind of Genesis Belanger" LA Times, June, 08, 2019.

<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-genesis-belanger-francois-ghelaby-20190608-story.html>



# Mouthy Pleasures

and  
Purgatorial  
Soothers:

The  
Work  
of Genesis  
Belanger

BY Andrew Berardini

*In the waiting room, the receptionist's desk tells a tale of delay and drudgery, with all the sundry medicines we eat to tolerate it.*

*Everything looks either recently abandoned or counter-intuitively preserved as some kind of inglorious tomb, preparation for an afterlife no better than this one.*















The half-wrapped hamburger plumply leers beside a few torn-open packets of ketchup. A retro office telephone with its host of buttons to multiple lines and speed-dials, holds and connections lazes, its yellow cord curling seductively. The oversized straw gently curls out of the soda, turning as if alive to look around, its red and white stripes coming to its mouth, alluringly open. Nearby a trio of blue ballpoint pens, like wilted flowers, limp dicks, lean lazily out of a coral-pink coffee mug. A pistachio tape dispenser doesn't hold tape but a soft, curling tongue, delectably unfurling over the edge that could snip it clean. A long slip of white paper shimmies and arches out of the adding machine like another tongue, reaching for that sloppy pink one lolling out of the dispenser. An open drawer holds a host of mouthy pleasures and oral fixations: a liquor bottle with a fleshy cap, an opened bar of lightly nibbled chocolate, a packet of pills. Two disembodied ladies' hands reach from the desk, one long and loose bends with a cigarette tucked between its fingers and a smart bracelet circling its wrist, while an arm arcing out of the desktop, sweated and cuffed, holds up with strength and style a little pink weenie.

Near the receptionist's desk, a sofa held up with legs made from sizable smashed cigarettes squats beside two lamps smirking with pinched faces, while on the cushion another hand with snaky fingers crawls out of the toothy zipper-mouth of its opening. On the clock above, it's permanently 2:55. One can only assume it's that long, dreary bit in the afternoon where you have no excuse not to be working but really can't wait to escape. A few ceramic bricks wrapped and tied with notes interrupt the placidity just so. The varicolored velvety curtains stage left give it all a theatrical flourish.

Carefully looking through *Holding Pattern*, this recent installation by artist Genesis Belanger at the New Museum, New York, it's easy to remember that Jean-Paul Sartre in his play *No Exit* (1944) saw hell as a waiting room where we're stuck with other people as our torture for eternity. At the New Museum, it's hard to say whose waiting room it is exactly: a therapist, a cosmetic surgeon, an executive? A waiting room for the resurrection, for the next life, for the miracle to come? So easy to look toward the future for answers than to live in the present, and we all have our little poisons to kill time. Seriously, what are you waiting for? Modernity makes most of us feel unsure, precarious, jumpy as hell; perhaps we're just waiting for the other shoe to drop. In Genesis's current show at François Ghebaly gallery in Los Angeles, this waiting room is paired with a wake in a funeral parlor, another kind of waiting to be sure.

Well, wherever it was and whatever we're waiting for, making others wait is always a power move, but here there's a certain kind of succulence to how Genesis has prepared her scenario. Everything flatly colored with soothing pastels like tooth-chipping confections, hard candy in soft shades. All of it, sometimes literally, a little mouthy.

Unnervingly soft and supple, in the borderlands of the bizarre, just a little cartoonish but totally alluring, Belanger's porcelain and stoneware ceramic scenes slyly turn things into bodies and vice versa, with a critical eye toward the suggestive sexiness of advertisements and a snicker of humor. The psychol-

ogy of power, so deftly deployed through desire and anxiety by capitalism, takes on human frailties and vitalities: long, erectly cylindrical cigarettes hang flaccid or crawl like caterpillars, hands and wrists elongate into slinky, boneless curves gripping giant pills in muted hues. "A well-manicured hand can sell about anything" says Belanger.<sup>1</sup> And as far as I can tell, all her disembodied hands are very well manicured indeed.

Turning things into bodies is only a little less creepy than turning bodies into things, but that's just beneath the surface; all the body parts and erect fruits, mouthy bouquets and shapely desserts that Genesis makes are really quite funny and likable. It's only later that you understand they're also a bit fucked up. Our manipulated desires, the dissatisfaction bred into us by capitalism, the purgatorial pacifiers we suck on to deal with the anxiety—her soft pastels are a luscious frosting over some serious predicaments of our contemporary condition.

With its optimistic colors and gently suppressed troubles, there's a cool advertorial, early-1960s vibe cocktail just so in Genesis's work, recalling Matthew Brannon's graphic and literary monoprints. But rather than the general upper-middle-class anxiety tumbling out of Brannon's clean lines, with Genesis we feel the nascent feminism of that era more keenly. (In both, however, I feel they're exploring the origins of the world we're living in now, going back to somehow to figure out how the hell we got here.) It's that moment when wives began to find the first release from domestic servitude by way of labor savers like washing machines and refrigerators, but were still stuck in the role of maid/cook/sex slave for their husbands; a spot of extra time and energy but without spiritual or intellectual outlets. Another point where the patriarchy left women feeling crazy (or as creepster Sigmund Freud might say, "hysterical"), with a burgeoning pharmaceutical industry ready to dispense to housewives succulently colored pills to stave off madness. Feminine anxiety winked from the drugstore covers of *Valley of the Dolls* and *Cosmo*, sedative prescriptions tightly clutched in lotioned hands.

Capitalism has long been expert in creating conditions of dissatisfaction and madness and then selling us solutions that never quite work.<sup>2</sup> In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), Oscar Wilde wrote "A cigarette is the perfect type of a perfect pleasure. It is exquisite, and it leaves one unsatisfied. What more can one want?"<sup>3</sup> He could have been talking about consumer capitalism. Addictive, poisonous, carefully marketed, totally sexy, and absolutely gross—still most of us can't shake the cool lent by a dangling cigarette even after the terrible industry has been so totally exposed for its trickery and murder. One could so easily say the same about pharmaceuticals, running for the shelter of our mother's little helpers. More than few cigarettes and pills beckon from Genesis's work.

In the twenty-first century, female empowerment is another brand, and the anxiety industries of cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and sundry other adult pacifiers so often directed at women hum merrily along. More troubling still is that whatever self-awareness we bring to our exposure to the myriad ways that capitalism sells things to us, however obvious its manipulations may be, the sex they sell is still sexy.

GENESIS BELANGER was born in 1978 in the United States of America. She holds an MFA from CUNY Hunter College and a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Belanger was recently the subject of a New Museum solo exhibition, *Holding Pattern*, curated by Margot Norton, and will present a solo exhibition later in 2019 at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield, Connecticut. Belanger was Artist in Residence at Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, in 2017. Her practice has been covered in the pages of the *New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Artforum*, *The Art Newspaper*, and *Galerie Magazine*. *Coins for the Ferryman* is her first solo exhibition at François Ghebaly, Los Angeles. Belanger lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

ANDREW BERARDINI is a writer and Los Angeles editor for *Mousse*. He recently co-curated Kris Lemsalu's solo presentation for the Estonian Pavilion in the 58<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (2019).



Like Tom Wesselmann or Kiki Kogelnik, Genesis seems to enjoy the sexuality and sensuality so readily exploited by Madison Avenue. In her particular sculptural constructions, she takes the ad industries' lusty allusions one lick further, turning the suggestively sexy into literal manifestations that reveal their own absurdity and hint at those conditions that create a need for psychic analgesics. The artist possesses a self-awareness regarding the modern marketing of femininity, proposed in scenes like recently vacated sets in connotatively gendered spaces, the narrative up to us to supply. (And one suspects that beyond the discrete individual objects, Genesis's further forays will be into ever more complex scenarios.)

Stroking the manipulative allure that consumer culture cultivates in all of us, Genesis's take seems neither a dogmatic critique nor a vapid embrace (two directions other artists have taken to deal with post-war consumer culture and the powers that make it so), but rather a tense both/and, employing very real allure while simultaneously manifesting a dark awareness of its psychological manipulations. Her sly insinuations can sometimes feel almost coy: the slathered hot dog peeking from the zippery teeth of the gym bag might look a little cocky as it peeks from a vagina dentata, but sometimes a hot dog is just a hot dog, and however that sideways slit might grin, its neither a mouth nor a pussy.

Really though, it's not so difficult to jump from one wiener to another. But these are more than just suggestions. Even knowing the game, how manipulated we've been, how deplorable the conditions that brought us here, whether hot dogs or pills, cigarettes or chewing gum, they're all things to stuff into our dissatisfied mouths. And resist as we might, whether a pill or a cigarette or a drink, we still desperately want to stuff our mouths.



Genesis Belanger: *Holding Pattern* installation views at New Museum, New York, 2019. Courtesy: the artist. Photo: Charles Benton

- 1 Christina Nafziger "Genesis Belanger: Simpsons Episode About the Uncanny" *Art Maze Mag*, Accessed May 7, 2019. See <https://artmazemag.com/genesis-belanger-simpsons-episode-about-the-uncanny/>.
- 2 See Adam Curtis's documentary series *The Century of the Self* (London: RDF Television, 2002).
- 3 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Lippincott's, 1890)







Genesis Belanger  
*Stepford Wife / Sister Wife*, 2018, stoneware,  
porcelain, plaster, linen lampshade.

## IN LIMBO

*Genesis Belanger's oddball surrealist sculptures speak to some of life's most unsettling realities.*

BY RANDI BERGMAN

**Genesis Belanger is fascinated with liminal spaces—the** hallways, the empty parking lots, the metaphysical waiting rooms of life. They're real places, sure, but they also represent impermanence, anticipation, and the feeling that you're on the verge, but not quite there. Another way to put it? The oft-shaky present. "We're living in this patriarchy and there's this promise of equality, and we're working towards it, but it hasn't happened, so we're sort of on the threshold," she says. "I felt like a waiting room was a perfect physical manifestation of feeling like you're being held in time."

It might sound like the Brooklyn-based sculptor is describing purgatory, but a quick glance at her so-called waiting rooms would reveal just the opposite: a universe so full of kooky pastel objects, you'll want to stay forever.

Belanger's surreal sculptures include a lighter with a tongue in place of a flame, a sandal stuffed with tropical fruits, and an ice cream sundae topped with coins and diamond rings. And they're all figments of a wild imagination that has been fuelled by episodes of *The Simpsons*, Claymation, and the design floor at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "It's an odd mix of high and low," she says. "I'm so moved by classic design elements, but at the same time, I can't avoid *The Simpsons*—they



Genesis Belanger  
*Swollen*, 2018, stoneware,  
porcelain.

Genesis Belanger: *Stepford Wife / Sister Wife*, 2018. Stoneware, porcelain, plaster, linen, linen lampshade; photographed by Pauline Shapiro, courtesy of the artist and Galerie Perrotin. Courtesy of the artist and Mis. Gallery. Genesis Belanger: *Swollen*, 2018. Stoneware, porcelain; photographed by Pauline Shapiro, courtesy of the artist and Galerie Perrotin.

Genesis Belanger, view of installation *Holding Pattern*, 2019, New Museum; photographed by Pauline Shapiro, courtesy of the artist and Gheba Gallery. Photographed by Charles Benton, courtesy of the artist and New Museum. Genesis Belanger, *At Rest*, 2018, stoneware, porcelain, plaster, linen lampshade; photographed by Pauline Shapiro, courtesy of the artist and Galerie Perotin.



Genesis Belanger  
View of the installation *Holding Pattern*, 2019,  
New Museum.



Genesis Belanger  
*At Rest*, 2018, stoneware, porcelain, plaster,  
linen lampshade.

were so huge when I was little, and those characters are archetypes that I feel have not gone away. I feel super influenced by them.”

They’re also a metamorphosis of the artist’s previous career in advertising, where she’d often create props for elaborately staged photoshoots. “A lot of the images we look at are sold to us as reality, but really they’re super constructed in the service of capitalism, or to use our psychology against us,” she says. “I use some of these same tools, but instead of trying to sell things, I try to start conversations or bring a different sense of self-awareness to the viewer.”

Incredibly, Belanger’s sculptures are all hand-molded, a fact belied by their elegant, machine-made appearance. “It’s funny to see people trying to figure out how I make things,” she says. “I use the most rudimentary pottery tools, like plastic ribs, to achieve the smooth edges.”

In *Holding Pattern*, her installation for The New Museum’s storefront window, Belanger constructed a

receptionist’s desk strewn with wilted pens (“They have been waiting so long that they’re starting to droop”), a displaced arm pinching a hot dog, and a tape dispenser holding pink bubble gum tape, a staple candy of the era she grew up in. “I’ve been asked whether my work reflects my own narrative, and I think we can’t subtract ourselves from our work,” she says. For her solo show, “Coin for the Ferryman,” currently on display at Los Angeles’s Ghebaly Gallery, she expanded that world even further. Beyond the desk, you’ll find a stack of mattresses topped by a big gaudy toothbrush with fingers for bristles and liquor bottles stuffed with flowers.

Belanger’s formative years, late ’80s and early ’90s, are impossible to miss in her sculptures. “I like the things I make to have a tint of nostalgia,” she says. “It has become a dirty word in the art world, but I read that nostalgia is what allows people to remember that there was once something better than there is now and feel motivated to move forward—so to me, it has this really positive connotation.”

Bergman, Randi. “In Limbo: Genesis Belanger’s oddball surrealist sculptures speak to some of life’s most unsettling realities,” *S Magazine*, Summer 2019.

## An Artist Who Pokes Fun at How the Female Body Is Bought and Sold

By Colleen Kelsey



Photo: Amanda Hakan

The first time I saw a work by Genesis Belanger I wanted to go over and squeeze it, despite the implicit invisible social contract between viewer and artwork to *please, do not touch*.

In Belanger's work, sharp tongues extend out from lipstick tubes and lighters. Cigarettes crawl like cartoon millipedes, while disembodied fingers reach through the surface of a paper-wrapped flower bouquet. A wooden-heeled clog, adorned with a decorative pom-pom, grins a toothsome smile. Oversized pills the length of a pinky finger look cute, rather than lifted from the cover of a first-edition copy of *Valley of the Dolls*. In slightly desaturated shades of confection-colored pastels, these *objets* have a fluid, taffy-soft tactility that is inviting but leaves a sinister sweetness in your throat. I had the unsettling feeling that her work could come to life at any moment.



Photo: Amanda Hakan.

The uncanniness is by design. For the past three years, the New York–based artist has sculpted a continuing series of sly, surrealism-injected consumables out of porcelain and clay that read as critical case studies for the feminine experience and how it has been bought and sold.

Belanger’s studio, located on the fourth floor of a building on an industrial strip wedged between McCarren Park and the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, is clean, bright, and meticulously organized. A kiln sits in the corner like an engine at rest. She shows me a piece that will be exhibited at Galerie Perrotin on the Lower East Side — a vanity strewn with ceramic renderings of an ashtray, a cosmetics compact, nail polish, perfume, a bottle of popped Champagne stuffed with a limp hot dog, and a sentient ice cube of an eyeball spilling out of a knocked-over glass.

The vanity is the latest arena of fascination for Belanger, who has also made work about gentlemen’s clubs and kitchen counters. “I have an interest in spaces that, to me, almost seem arbitrarily gendered,” Belanger says. “A lot of images online of vanities are from films of woman characters that were ‘hysterical.’ I was thinking about this hysterical woman and the idea of female hysteria being a mental disorder. There are contemporary manifestations, like a ‘hot mess.’ What are the signs of a hysterical hot mess? Pills, spilled drinks, lots of makeup. How can I make it feel even more ridiculous?”

Before getting to work, Belanger pulls reference material from the internet and studies her subject’s political or historical moment. “I think about these spaces as sets for a narrative to unfold,” she says. A valuable source of research were the years the 40-year-old New England native spent working as a prop stylist on advertising jobs. “Being in the industry, it was fascinating to me how constructed all of our images are,” she tells me. “I was also really impressed with how effective this method of working was in creating desire.”



Photo: Amanda Hakan.

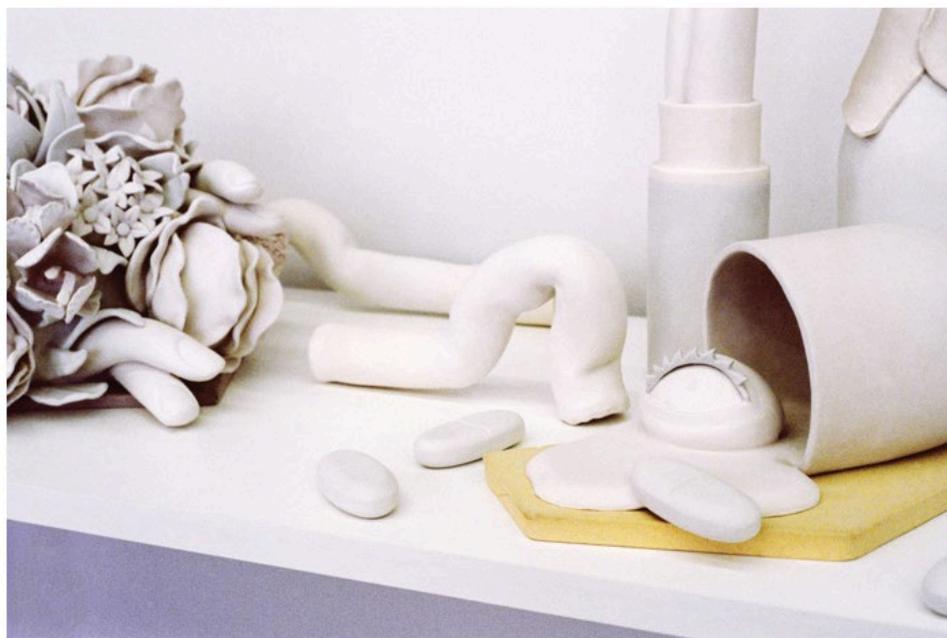


Photo: Amanda Hakan

Belanger first started sculpting ceramics while getting her MFA at Hunter College. “I didn’t see a lot of contemporary art and I didn’t really have an idea about what an artist was,” she says. “I thought any person in a creative field was an artist. So I really didn’t discern between art and design.”

She constructs each of her pieces out of sheets of clay, tinkering with pigment to find the exact shade of prescription saccharine. She returns to certain motifs again and again, like the cigarette, which was originally marketed to women in the 1920s as a vehicle for liberation. She refers to these things as “weighted symbols,” which also include bitten apples, flowers, and hands. “I really like

how an articulated finger can be a stand-in for the whole body,” she says. “You realize in all vintage advertising and contemporary advertising, there are random women’s well-manicured fingers in everything.”

A pair of lamps entitled *Stepford Wife/Sister Wife* is an apt summation of Belanger’s holistic thinking. Through one of her internet deep-dives, she came across an online forum called the “Stepford Wives Club,” that reads like a manual for those with a submissive fetish, but is instead a rallying point for women insistent on maintaining the patriarchal order. Belanger’s lamps, dressed in high-necked, bell-sleeved dresses reminiscent of the wardrobe of the 1975 film, put the female form on an eerie pedestal. “I think if you make anything beautiful it instantly creates a desire,” Belanger says. “So, I try to make objects of these absurd things, but I try to make them as luscious and beautiful as possible.”

*The installation “Genesis Belanger: Holding Pattern” will be on view at the New Museum until April 14.*

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### genesis belanger: holding pattern exhibits at new museum in new york city

with ceramics sculpted in porcelain and stoneware pigmented in pastel hues, genesis belanger's series entitled 'holding pattern' culls the uncanny from the everyday. exhibited at new york's new museum, such mundane items as cigarette stubs, soda cans, handbags, and stray pills are rendered strange as they become surrogates for the body, evoking both comfort and disquiet. while belanger introduces references from pop art, surrealism, and seventeenth-century dutch paintings, her work remains acutely attuned to contemporary archetypes. the smooth and supple elegance of her forms often contrasts with their darkly humorous insinuations relating to subjects such as mass production and chemical dependency.



'genesis belanger: holding pattern,' 2019 | exhibition view: new museum, new york

all images by charles benton

**'holding pattern' at the new museum expresses the influence from liminal spaces where one might dwell in a state of limbo.** these spaces include office waiting rooms, hotel lobbies, or airport lounges. belanger's objects invoke this liminality through their posture, often seeming limp or wilting as if they had been left or forgotten over time. viewers peer through the window onto a receptionist's desk adorned with office supplies and an uneaten lunch, while an open desk drawer reveals items one might consume in order to cope with the stresses of daily life such as candy, a bottle of liquor, and pill packets.



**a low bench with two grinning lamps faces visitors between a color-paneled curtain punctuating the threshold between the windows.** this barrier serves to divide the space of waiting from that of anticipation. ceramic bricks wrapped with notes are scattered throughout with the implication of waiting to be pitched through a window allowing those trapped in purgatory to break free. curated by margot norton, 'genesis belanger: holding pattern' joins a new series of storefront window installations that relaunches a program the new museum originally mounted in the 1980s.

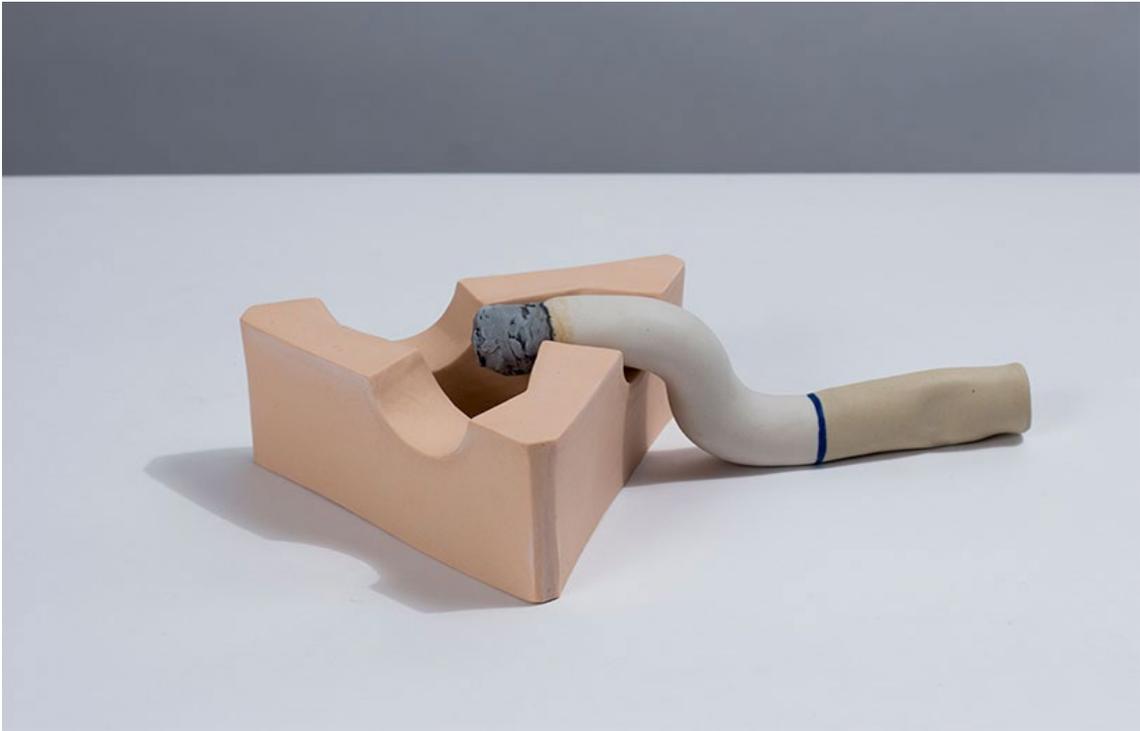








acquiesce, 2018. stoneware | 13 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 16 in (34.3 x 19.1 x 15.2 cm)  
image courtesy the artist and nathalie karg gallery



at rest, 2018. porcelain | 12 x 17 x 4 in (30.5 x 43.2 x 10.2 cm)  
courtesy the artist and mrs. gallery, new york



daily adoration, 2018 | stoneware, porcelain, plywood, and fabric | 46 7/16 x 63 x 28 in (118 x 160 x 71.1 cm)  
installation view: a strange relative, perrotin, new york  
courtesy the artist and perrotin, new york

**project info:**

**exhibition title:** genesis belanger: holding pattern

**artist:** genesis belanger

**location:** new museum, new york city

**curator:** margot norton

**support:** toby devan lewis emerging artists exhibitions fund

Barandy, Kat. "genesis belanger: holding pattern exhibits at new museum in new york city," *Designboom*, February 17, 2019.

<https://www.designboom.com/art/genesis-belanger-holding-pattern-new-museum-02-17-19/>

artnet news

On View

## Beauty ‘Can Be a Powerful Tool’: Artist Genesis Belanger on How Her Surreal Sculptures Address Our Present Moment

The artist brings her delightfully warped perspective to the New Museum, which hosts her latest show.

Taylor Dafoe, January 23, 2019



Genesis Belanger in her studio, 2018. Photo: Taylor Dafoe.

Walk past the storefront window of the New Museum these days and you’ll see what looks like an office from a cartoon nightmare: the desk is propped up on limp cigarettes, the lamps have lips, the tape dispenser is a tongue.

This is the work of Genesis Belanger, a 40-year-old, Brooklyn-based sculptor who transforms mundane, everyday objects into fantastical and unreal stoneware. “Holding Pattern,” the title of her New Museum installation (curated by Margot Norton), evokes a kind of waiting room of the subconscious, and like much of her work, it is at once disconcerting and funny.

“There’s something so American about the symbols she uses—the cheeseburger and the ketchup packets and the soda cans,” Norton says. “It harkens back to pop art—Wesselmann and Lichtenstein. It plays with art history, and very specific American archetypes in art.”

Indeed, references spring to mind easily. With Belanger’s deadpan treatment of absurd juxtapositions, early 20th century Surrealism comes to mind, especially Magritte. Her wry take on domestic life and white-collar work environments puts her in conversation with artists like Martha Rosler. Meanwhile, the human touch behind her elongated forms evokes the work



Works by Genesis Belanger. Photo: Taylor Dafeo.

of the New Museum’s most recent retrospective subject, Sarah Lucas. Yet despite these many cues toward the past, the work feels decidedly of the moment. Belanger taps into the strangeness of our late capitalist landscape, in which it’s not uncommon to hear people describe, say, the latest political scandal or tech innovation as “surreal.” She also dramatizes—sometimes to the point of grotesquery—our cultural fetishization of branding and our over-the-counter coping mechanisms.

“Genesis’s work can, at first glance, look very alluring—in a similar way to many of the objects in storefront windows in the area,” Norton says. “But of course, her objects have a disquieting effect when one takes a closer look. I love that kind of interplay in her work.”

Belanger grew up all around the United States—the daughter of hippies, she jokes—but considers Vermont her home. She took a circuitous route through school, studying at Parsons, RISD, and Cooper Union, before

getting her undergraduate degree in fashion design from the Art Institute of Chicago. Not long after, she moved to New York and began working as a prop-maker for high-profile advertising campaigns.

The experience would come to influence her great deal, and after putting in several years in the industry, she went back to school, got her MFA from Hunter College and transitioned to sculpture.

On a cold day in January, artnet News visited Belanger in her two-room Brooklyn studio. Sitting amid the just-finished work for her New Museum installation, she discussed her work ethic, the appeal of the uncanny, and why categories don't matter.



Genesis Belanger's studio. Photo: Taylor Dafoe.

**Growing up, you moved around and traveled a great deal. Looking back, how did those experiences influence your approach to art?**

My parents were what we would now call counterculture types, and lived a bit on the drift. We moved yearly for the majority of my life. I didn't mind all the moving. Looking back, I've come to really appreciate those uncomfortable experiences. I work in a medium that has a certain amount of failure, and my work doesn't always survive the process of creating it. I think the way I grew up taught me not to get too attached.



Sculptures included in Belanger's exhibition "Holding Pattern" at the New Museum.  
Photo: Taylor Dafoe.

**You worked briefly as a prop-builder for advertising campaigns before getting your MFA. Given the seductiveness of your work, I imagine advertising is a big influence.**

It is. Advertising is brilliant people using visual languages to manipulate our desire in the service of capitalism. Moral judgments aside, this is fascinating to me. Beauty is not empty; it can be a powerful tool.



Details from Belanger's studio. Photo: Taylor Dafoe.

**Surrealism has been the subject of renewed interest in recent years, as an art movement and an idea—think about how often people remark that the political climate feels “surreal.” Why do you think that is?**

I think this relates directly to the idea of the uncanny, something familiar but strange and uncomfortable, where it should be comfortable. For a moment, it seemed like we were progressing towards our goals of dignity and respect for all. Then, poof! In a cloud of smoke, we are suddenly a country digging in its heels in support of the heteronormative, white, patriarchal, tired, and old status quo.



Genesis Belanger in her studio, 2018. Photo: Taylor Dafoe.

**The line between design and fine art is becoming increasingly blurry. Do you think this is a good thing? Do you feel your work belongs more in one camp than the other?**

I am all for the blurring of categories. Most things actually exist in the nuanced spaces between categories. I am happy to hover on that edge.

**What’s your worst studio habit?**

Hmmm, probably not scheduling time to answer anyone’s emails. I am pretty bad about that.



Details from Belanger's studio. Photo: Taylor Dafoe.

**You have a strong work ethic in the studio, keeping business hours and spending at least five days a week here. Why is this schedule important for you?**

Art-making is really a practice. If you do push-ups every day, you get fitter and stronger. If you make art every day, you move through ideas and strengthen your craft. I try to stay in good shape!



Details from Belanger's studio. Photo: Taylor Dafoe.



Details from Belanger's studio. Photo: Taylor Dafoe.



Details from Belanger's studio. Photo: Taylor Dafoe.

*“Genesis Belanger: Holding Pattern” is on view at the New Museum through April 14, 2019.*

Dafoe, Taylor. “Beauty ‘Can Be a Powerful Tool’: Artist Genesis Belanger on How Her Surreal Sculptures Address Our Present Moment,” *Artnet News*, January 23, 2019.  
<https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/genesis-belanger-1445260>

## What to See in New York City Art Galleries This Week

### Genesis Belanger

*Through Nov. 4. Mrs., 60-40 56th Drive, Maspeth, Queens; 347-841-6149,  
mrsgallery.com.*

Surrealism and Pop Art were concerned with mass production, consumerism and the psychic impact of living in a world flooded with objects. Genesis Belanger picks up this thread in “Cheap Cookie and a Tall Drink of Water” at Mrs.



"Cheap Cookie," 2017. Mrs. Gallery

Ms. Belanger's sculptures, made with stoneware, porcelain and concrete, allude to recognizable objects and yet blur their references. "Cheap Cookie" (all works are from 2017) is an Oreo grasped between two human fingers, rounded into a nearly abstract circle. "Dog in Heels" is a hot dog eased into a sandal and "Big Yummy" looks like a minimalist concrete slab, but actually represents a piece of chewing gum wrapped in foil paper.



"Big Yummy," 2017. Mrs. Gallery

Part of the attraction of Ms. Belanger's work is how it conjures art history: Salvador Dalí's lobster phone; Meret Oppenheim's fur-covered teacup; Claes Oldenburg's soft sculptures; Man Ray's objects wrapped in felt; and pieces by Evelyne Axell, Marisol, Niki de Saint Phalle, Tom Wesselmann, Brian Calvin, Al Hansen and many others working in the Pop idiom.



"Dog in Heels," 2017. Mrs. Gallery

Where earlier artists were focused on the uncanniness of new electronics and mass-produced food, however, or stripped them down to a midcentury malaise, Ms. Belanger takes a middle path. Her sculptures, with their rounded surfaces and pastel hues, reflect an era of postmodern design, of so-called "user friendly" electronics and "relatable" experiences. Gadgets have become more prosthetic than ever and everything from hot dogs to cigarettes can be "organic." Rather than filling us with Freudian angst or existential terror over this situation, Ms. Belanger's sculptures feel like emotional support animals: comforting creatures (or biological "interfaces") that ease our way through a difficult and confusing world.

## MARTHA SCHWENDENER

Schwendener, Martha. "Genesis Belanger" *The New York Times*, October 25, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/25/arts/what-to-see-in-new-york-city-art-galleries-this-week.html>

# Galerie



Sculptor Genesis Belanger.

Photo: Steve Benisty

## Don't Miss Genesis Belanger's Thought-Provoking Sculptures at Perrotin

Her whimsical works will next be seen at L.A.'s Ghebaly Gallery and  
Rodolphe Janssen gallery in Brussels

by VICKY LOWRY  
DECEMBER 17, 2018

Surrealism may be a century old, but Brooklyn artist Genesis Belanger breathes new life into the conceptual movement with her droll, alluring sculptures. Hand-rolled in clay, porcelain, and concrete, the works often merge furniture shapes with classic still life objects, which are tinted in candy-color hues whose cheerful effect belies a pointed edge. A centerpiece features a woman's erotic lips and tongue sprouting from a bouquet of flowers.

A life-size vanity table is cluttered with the belongings of a "hot-mess character" of Belanger's imagination: perfume, booze, a melted chocolate



A 2018 stoneware-and-porcelain work, entitled *Center Piece*, by sculptor Genesis Belanger.  
Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Mrs. Gallery

bar. “It’s funny and sad at the same time,” she says. “I was thinking about how we marginalize women as they age—just when we become more dynamic and have more interesting things to say.”

Based on her exhibition schedule, Belanger has a surfeit of interesting things to say. Her new sculptures are currently paired with paintings by fellow Brooklyn artist Emily Mae Smith at New York’s Perrotin gallery (through December 22). Two solo shows follow: at Ghebaly Gallery in Los Angeles in May and Rodolphe Janssen gallery in Brussels in the fall. Yet despite a red-hot career, Belanger took a circuitous route.

She studied fashion design at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and built props for advertising campaigns in Manhattan before earning her MFA from Hunter College, where she was accepted into the painting program only to be captivated by clay. “It’s easy to find art in the abject, that touches some dark discord,” she says, “but I think it’s possible to make work that is relevant and beautiful.”



Installation: Genesis Belanger and Emily Mae Smith: *A Strange Relative*.

Photo: Dario Lasagni / Courtesy of the artists and Perrotin.



Installation: Genesis Belanger and Emily Mae Smith: A Strange Relative.

Photo: Dario Lasagni / Courtesy of the artists and Perrotin.

Lowry, Vicky. "Don't Miss Genesis Belanger's Thought-Provoking Sculptures at Perrotin"  
*Galerie Magazine*, December 17, 2018.  
<https://www.galeriemagazine.com/genesis-belanger-perrotin/?fbclid=IwAR10SvfpJvndeUTarBA-j17cNoNSCjZVPAola4pyvRnsfNrPcOkEw1WzWhXE>

## The Artist Critiquing Feminine Clichés With Ceramic Heels and Cigarette Butts

Genesis Belanger's porcelain sculptures playfully send up the advertising campaigns she once helped create as a prop stylist.



By Merrell Hambleton

Nov. 2, 2018



The artist Genesis Belanger's sun-filled Williamsburg studio could easily be mistaken for a sort of strange, surrealist kitchen. There is a large, stainless-steel kiln in one corner and next to it, a rolling cart stacked with small rectangles of stoneware, like so many cookies fresh from the oven. A mint-green KitchenAid mixer, which Belanger uses to incorporate pigment into porcelain, stands nearby. Otherworldly objects — a bouquet of flowers and fingers, a champagne bottle stopped with the end of a hot dog, supersize cigarettes stubbed out in an ashtray as big as a dinner plate, all pale as raw dough — dry on a shelf, resembling cakes waiting to be baked.

Of course, Belanger, 40, doesn't turn out soft, sweet confections but meticulous porcelain-and-stoneware sculptures with an acid bite. Using tropes from Surrealism, Pop Art and advertising, her cartoonish pieces are sharp, humorous sendups of feminine clichés: the lipstick tube, the handbag, the manicure.



Fruit — often ripe and bitten into — is a recurring theme in Belanger's work. "It can be a metaphor for our obsession with youth and fear of aging," she says. *Nicholas Calcott*

When I visit her studio on a bright day in late October, the artist is putting the finishing touches on work for her upcoming show "A Strange Relative," which opens at the Perrotin gallery in New York on November 3 and will also feature paintings by the artist Emily Mae Smith (whose studio is just down the hall). Belanger, who is fine-boned with bright blue eyes and a quality of ethereal, radiant lightness, maneuvers deftly around the space, gingerly moving objects. I hold my breath as she nudges one sculpture — two long fingers kicked up like the legs of a pinup girl and adorned with large costume jewelry rings — along the wall with her knee. She tells me she once dropped a Seamless order on a sculpture and it lopped off the arm. "I don't get that attached," she says, smiling.

Belanger grew up in Woodstock, Vt., where she remembers poring over books about craft at the public library and painting still lifes alongside her father, who is also an artist. Though she knew she wanted to make art from an early age, her path to her current practice has been an indirect one. She did coursework at Parsons, Cooper Union and the Rhode Island School of Design — where she studied video and animation — before graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a degree in fashion design. She learned pattern making from the artist Nick Cave and interned at Moschino in Milan where, she says, "the line between art and fashion was thin." Still, after an unsatisfying post-college job designing clothes she concluded that "the depth of conversation you can have with a coat is limited."



Belanger never uses glaze. Instead, she incorporates powder pigment into wet clay using a stand mixer. "Glaze is melted glass, and it always feels really on-the-surface," she says. "This is more integrated." Nicholas Calcott



"Every show has pedestals that are some sort of almost-furniture," says Belanger. Here, a porcelain-and-stoneware sculpture rests on a chaise lounge with concrete cigarette butts for legs. Nicholas Calcott

For the next five years, Belanger worked primarily as a prop assistant making absurd and intricate items for ad campaigns: a giant powder puff for a Victoria's Secret spread, a paper castle for a Tiffany's window, white vinyl flowers for a Chanel party. She enjoyed the work and part of her believed that she could be happy "making everything very beautiful." Still, she felt a lingering emptiness. "I knew that even if I became an artistic director, I would want to be more of a mastermind," she says. "And I wanted things to be more esoteric."

Though she left advertising to pursue an M.F.A. at Hunter College in 2009, Belanger remained fascinated by the industry. She was interested, particularly, in the way advertising constructs femininity as glossy, mysterious and sexy. Using techniques borrowed from advertising — world-building, abstracting the female body — she started to poke fun at and upend these stereotypes. "I wanted to build narratives that dealt with some of the ways that women are complex," she says.



Belanger uses pigmented slip to add color to her sculpture. This mule and its partner, both finished with pom-poms and Cheshire cat-like grins, will sit under a vanity in Belanger's installation. Nicholas Calcott

For “A Strange Relative,” Belanger and Smith were thinking about the idea of female hysteria, a dated but persistent cultural diagnosis. “We thought that the contemporary version of a hysterical woman might be ‘the hot mess,’” says Belanger. “And how she’s considered desirable, but in a patronizing way.” The two artists started to imagine what kind of space this archetype would inhabit, and then began to build characters and props to fill it.

Together, they made a vignette which includes a painting by Smith and a vanity table strewn with objects by Belanger: an ashtray with a chewed-up piece of gum, a glass spilling ice and cartoon eyes, discarded cigarettes and pills. “She’s not a slick bad girl, she can’t even clean her apartment,” says Belanger, mimicking the adman pitch. “But she’s so sexy.”

*“A Strange Relative” is on view from November 3 to December 22 at the Perrotin gallery, 130 Orchard Street, New York, perrotin.com.*