

*Genesis Belanger | Perrotin, Paris*

By Andrew Bernardini, January 2023 issue



The powdery, soft-toned Surrealist ceramic sculptures of Genesis Belanger round off with pillowy curves and blush with bubble-gum colors. Just what is it that makes her work so different, so appealing? Perhaps it's how her carefully composed tableaux of modern life coalesce into bodies, while her bodies snap cleanly into objects. Despite the curling tongues and snaky fingers' sensual allure, these chopped-up parts are so pristinely severed that it's hard to imagine them as human forms at all, lacking as they do our wet-work anatomy's particularly messy

viscera. There's a tender tension between the clearly fucked-up horror show of a chaise longue (*Nude in Repose*, all works 2022) or gurney (*Minor Procedure*) stacked with dismembered limbs and torsos of women and the sweet, pretty way these bits of people are crafted from such pleasing hues and material.

The artist titled her recent exhibition "Blow Out," a phrase that wields more than a few twisting meanings: a damp breath snuffing a candle flame, a popped tire, a storm losing its force, a decisive defeat, a particularly

nasty fight, a truly rocking party, and (lest we forget the gallery is a retail space) a gargantuan sale with cut-rate prices. Altogether, these scattered definitions are not such a bad description of postindustrial life in our late-capitalist, early-climate-catastrophe times, and Belanger in one way or another touched on the lot in this display. (The last line of a 2011 poem by Sharon Olds protruded anew in this context: "Know, as you would be known / Blow, as you would be blown.")

Alongside watercolors and gouaches in a separate room, Belanger composed her distinctive vanitas here, dividing her usual pastel porcelain hell into a trio of spaces: a grocery store, a postparty conversation den, and an operating room. The grocery store featured Healthy Living, a silvery shopping cart plumped up (or rather only half staffed) with an odd assortment of consumer items that were hard not to see as a bunch of soft cocks: the potted cactus flopped just so, the sordid bundle of asparagus flaccidly limp, a bunned hot dog supinely curled, an open carton of milk with a less-than-virile straw bent weakly earthward. Behind the cart hung Impulse Buy, a section of tiled wall sporting a pair of kitchen shelves with some condiment bottles, a few open boxes, a spoon balancing a couple of sugar cubes, and three oranges in a hanging sack with a vaginal slice cut from each.

The chopped body on the pale-teal sofa of *Nude in Repose* in the den was variously an explicitly feminist take on female objectification, according to a quote from the artist on the gallery website. Rippling from its cushions, the quaintly checkered picnic blanket of *Not One Single Regret* undulated with half-eaten fruits. In *Self Reflection*, popped balloons along with a lopped-off hand and chopped-off head were arranged just so, not far from lush bouquets of *To Many More*, to *All Your Future Endeavors* and *I'm So Proud of You*. Also nearby were the anthropomorphic lamps of *Flicker in the Ether* and *I Don't Believe in Ghosts*. In the operating room, a quartet of waiting women's feet peeked out from under a curtain in *Your Privacy*

*Is Very Important to Us*, while the aforementioned gurney plunked with body parts stood beside *Masculine Still Life (Keeping It Together)*, a table mustered with a tumescent cactus, a tape dispenser with a lolling tongue, and another popped balloon—a burst of continuity with the previous chambers.

For all their contemporary resonance, Belanger's subjects and color smack of a midcentury moment when a huge part of what makes up contemporary Western life took shape. Yes, classic Pop—from Richard Hamilton on—handled all these same issues. But here those formative aesthetics were soaked in the acid despair of unsublimated bourgeois desires and sharply touched by the last three waves of feminism. All of it was regarded by the artist with a clean commercial cool, a conscious reflection on a capitalism that knows how to churn despair and dismemberment into another appealing product.