

GaHee PARK

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The Hand: An Infinite Motif of Contemporary Art*

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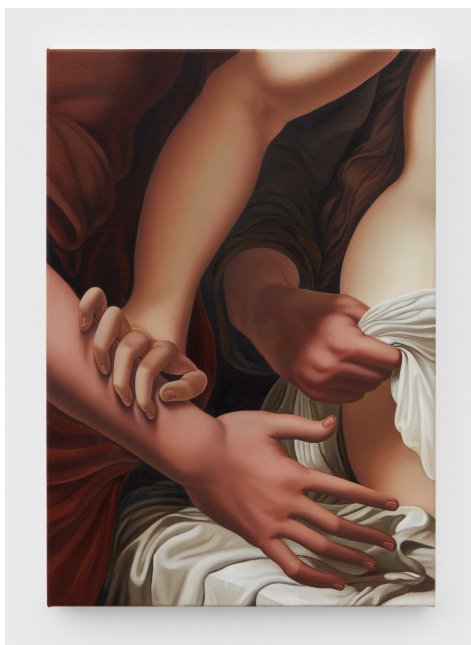
BeauxArts

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The Hand: An Infinite Motif of Contemporary Art

Maily Celeux-Lanval
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From the sleight of hand to the middle finger, the outstretched hand to the caressing palm, Perrotin embarks on a gripping and joyful examination of hands and fingers in contemporary art. This fall, 22 visual artists feature in a show curated by two of the gallery's artists, painter GaHee Park and sculptor Genesis Belanger. Hand games!



Jesse Mockrin, *Relentless*, 2022

Oil on linen • 55 × 38 cm • Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin and Night Gallery © Nik Massey

New York-based artist Genesis Belanger (b. 1978) reminds us from the outset that hands, and by extension fingers, have a prominent place in art history. It is God who stretches his index finger towards man on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (1508-1512) painted by Michelangelo, Caravaggio's Fortune Teller (1595-1598) who runs her fingertips over the palm of an innocent man...In many official portraits, the artist points out, the face and the entire body appear frozen - except for the hands, which are busy with a royal scepter, a fan, a book, or holding the brush in a self-portrait.



Left: Emily Mae Smith, 'Covenant', 2022 ; right : Ivy Haldeman, 'Heels, Stiletto to Palm, Pursed Fingers', 2022

Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin © Tanguy Beurdeley.

In fact, hands often play the leading role and, depending on their position, reveal the personality represented, the action, and what is at stake. To take a close interest in them is also to refocus one's attention on the body as powerful, abused, erotic, solitary, aggressive, sensual.

The two curators of the exhibition, Genesis Belanger and her friend GaHee Park (b. 1985), met while studying at Hunter College in New York. Both represented by Perrotin, they have chosen to dip their toes into curating: "Finger Bang" is a cheeky expression, which could be translated as... "fingering". In fact, sex is a recurring mantra here: a finger pointing at a red tongue (Emily Mae Smith's *Covenant*, 2022), a hand grasping an elastic building in a phallic manner (Trevor Baird's *Brutalist Tug Job*, 2022), or even a hand delicately gripping the heel of an elegant shoe (Ivy Haldeman's *Heels, Stiletto to Palm, Pursed Fingers*, 2022). Just enough to make you blush and notice to what extent eroticism, by its suggestive power, can feed very hypnotic images...

But the hand is also political. It reaches for the sky with a closed fist to represent anger. It made activist groups such as "Touche pas à mon pote" and "Black Panthers" become well-known. The painter Mark Yang presents a collection of seven hand positions (Svadhishthana, 2022), from the middle finger to the 'OK' sign of divers – similar to a mini-dictionary of manual language. In Robin F. Williams' work, a furious heroine crosses the canvas similarly to Judith charging towards Holofernes, one finger on her mouth asking for silence, the other hand clutching a sharp knife (Shhhh, 2022). Genesis Belanger has chosen to slip a few stems with twisted fingers into a ceramic bouquet, while GaHee Park has drawn a naked young woman, her face hidden behind a hand with red nails (*Half Pears*, 2021) - two works that speak to us in a subtle manner about having a complex relationship with oneself and others, between tenderness and aggression.



Robin F. Williams, *Shhhh*, 2022

Acrylic on canvas • 121.9 × 152.4 cm • Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin and P.P.O.W © JSP ART PHOTOGRAPHY

Then there are the hands that create poetry, strangeness. Intentionally cartoonish, Sarah Slappey has imagined a hand scratching the sole of a plump foot with its sharp nails (Push and Pierce, 2022) ...And Nikki Maloof a cutting board covered with sausages, alluding to a well-known analogy (Sausage Fingers, 2022). Ceramist Jessica Stoller, creates an illusion with a peculiar cake with colorful icing, topped with nails so long that they give the whole a golden crown (Untitled (fringe), 2019). Finally, the finger sensually slipped into a book by Henni Alftan (Novel, 2022) leaves a lasting impression as a relentless and minimalist demonstration of the 1001 possibilities... of fingertips!

→ Finger Bang

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