



Emily Mae Smith, *Fruits of Labor*, 2018.

Genesis Belanger, *Well Appointed*, 2018.

## Genesis Belanger & Emily Mae Smith

### *A Strange Relative*

Opening November 3, 2018, 6-8pm  
November 3 - December 22, 2018

Perrotin New York is proud to announce an exhibition of new work by Brooklyn-based artists Genesis Belanger and Emily Mae Smith. For their two-person show at Perrotin, they have engaged in a close dialogue: a game of inter-referentiality. Paintings by Smith and sculptures by Belanger, discrete bodies of work unto themselves, speak to each other across disciplines in surefooted, refreshing solidarity.

Emily Mae Smith's paintings are executed with photorealistic rigor. Their content, however, bears little relation to the 'real!' They tend, instead, towards a kind of Surrealism where a displacement of references is the operative strategy. In an ongoing series, an anthropomorphic broom figure, reminiscent of the bewitched worker from *Fantasia* (1940), stands in for a female figure. She has appeared both as artist—touting a brush and easel on the cover of art magazines—and subject, a surrogate figure in reimaginings of well-known paintings.

In Smith's *The Drawing Room* (2018), she appears as both subject and author. The work is a take on Marie-Denise Villers' 1801 *Portrait of a Woman Drawing*, a work that was for centuries misattributed to Jacques Louis David. A prescient feminist painting, Villers depicts herself squarely confronting the viewer, assured in her rank as artist at a time when it was looked down upon for women to pursue such a life path. Smith's stand-in for Villers updates and intensifies that powerful stance. Nearby, a chaise lounge sculpted by Genesis Belanger mirrors the one in the painting by Smith, a faithful model with the exception of its cigarette butts for legs. In place of the seated figure is an abandoned bouquet of bodega flowers with crossed human fingers among the blooms: the rejection of an empty apology or a half-hearted promise.



**Genesis Belanger**  
*Double Standards*, 2018.

**Emily Mae Smith**  
*The Drawing Room*, 2018.



**Genesis Belanger**  
*Daily Adoration*, 2018.

**Emily Mae Smith**  
*Medusa Moderne*, 2018.

Genesis Belanger's work is characterized by a surrogacy of the body, as objects, finely sculpted and tinted in fondant hues, take on human features. Everyday objects are made uncomfortably familiar as they begin to resemble us. The effect of Belanger's work is uncanny, as it tows the line between comfort and disquiet, the beautiful and the strange. Recalling the complex symbolic constructions of 17th century Dutch vanitas paintings, a sculptural still life by Belanger presents a seemingly mundane array—furniture, fruit, flowers—loaded with signs and symbols.

Belanger has crafted a dressing table with attendant accoutrements, a twisted take on items for grooming and consuming. A lipstick with a tongue for a crayon, prescription bottles, and pills scattered throughout paint the portrait of what could be understood as a vain and volatile, even hysterical subject—a critique of this female stereotype. Though the figure is physically absent from Belanger's sculpture, a painting by Smith hanging just above, fills in. Here is a spangled dressing room mirror with Smith's ubiquitous broom in its reflection. The broom appears in the hybrid role of petulant Hollywood star at her vanity and a Medusa with a coil of slithering snakes to cement the sense of mounting hysteria. Through myth and melodrama, Belanger and Smith tackle here—and throughout—enduring female archetypes.

The exhibition relies on a carefully intentioned interrelation of elements; Something in a tablescape by Belanger might appear in a painting by Smith or vice versa, never as a parroting of each other but as a riff upon which meanings compound. Like this, the eye travels between a series of fluid mises-en-scène, brimming with the pathos of a movie set and the unsettling feeling of having stumbled into an intimate space where something has just transpired, or something soon will. Such is the sense of anticipation, humor, and dread here, as though one were visiting *A Strange Relative*.

*Organized by Valentine Blondel, Director, Perrotin New York*

**More information about the artists >>>**

**Genesis Belanger** (b. 1978) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Belanger will present a new installation in the window of the New Museum's 231 Bowery building in January 2019. She has an upcoming solo exhibition at Francois Ghebaly, Los Angeles, USA in Spring 2019.

**Emily Mae Smith** (b. 1979) lives and works in Brooklyn New York. She is represented by Simone Subal in New York. Her work will be the subject of solo exhibitions at Le Consortium in Dijon, France (November 23 - April 14, 2019) and at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut, USA (February 7 – May 5, 2019).

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