

For Immediate Release

This Is Not a Prop

June 27–August 3, 2018

525 & 533 West 19th Street, New York

Opening reception: Wednesday, June 27, 6–8 PM

Press preview: Wednesday, June 27, 11 AM



Viewers interacting with Franz West, *Passstücke (mit Video mit Verwendungstips)* (*Adaptives [with Video with Usage Tips]*), 1996, during the exhibition *Franz West* at David Zwirner, New York, 2014. © 2018 Archiv Franz West

David Zwirner is pleased to present *This Is Not a Prop* at the gallery's 525 and 533 West 19th Street locations in New York. The exhibition features work by Alex Da Corte, Jonathas de Andrade, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Jonah Groeneboer, Gordon Hall, Hannah Levy, Donald Moffett, Paulo Nazareth, Elle Pérez, Oren Pinhassi, Christina Quarles, Paul Mpagi Sepuya, Wolfgang Tillmans, and Franz West.

This Is Not a Prop brings together a multigenerational group of artists whose work explores the liminal space between body and object. The exhibition takes as its point of departure Franz West's (1947–2012) furniture and *Passstücke* (*Adaptives*), which are represented in the show by three works: *Paravent (Passstück) (Screen [Adaptive])* (c. 1982); *2625* (1991); and *Passstücke (mit Video mit Verwendungstips)* (*Adaptives [with Video with Usage Tips]*) (1996). Intended to be interacted with, these works redefine art as a social experience and ask how objects can function both as physical extensions of the body and as representations of the human experience.

Alex Da Corte's (b. 1980) quiet and sensual film *Slow Graffiti* (2017), created for the artist's recent solo exhibition at Secession in Vienna, is on view for the first time in New York. A shot-for-shot remake of Jørgen Leth's *The Perfect Human* (1967), the work imagines the ideal man and woman replaced by the actor Boris Karloff and his infamous character Frankenstein, both played by the artist himself in makeup and prosthetics. Characteristic of his practice as a whole, the work explores the formal potential of everyday artifacts of consumer culture (such as lipstick, cigarettes, deli meats, and brooms, among others) and questions how these commodities can possess meaning beyond their original function.

Like West's furniture, Hannah Levy's (b. 1991) anthropomorphic works explore the intersection of sculpture and design. Made from silicone and stainless steel, Levy's two sculptures on view mine the familiar ergonomic shapes of contemporary design to reveal a sense of fleshiness and corporeality beneath their slick surfaces.

Donald Moffett (b. 1955) treats the canvas as a surrogate for the body, creating orifices by drilling holes into the surface of his paintings. Suggestive of both sexuality and erosion, his work is steeped in social, political, and sexual critique. *Lot 061110/12 (the cadmium hole)* (2010–2012), displayed at waist height with four metal pipes securing it to the wall, explores the visceral dichotomy between rough and soft textures.

In Paulo Nazareth's (b. 1977) photographs, the way in which individuals relate to objects engenders questions of identity, race, and heritage. *Sem título* (2011) depicts the artist with an animal carcass wrapped around his head, while *NA - Surrealismo en Mexico* (2011) shows Nazareth holding the string of a silver balloon in his mouth. Both works suggest a sly and playful subversion of stereotypes, and an interest in banal or overdetermined objects as appendages of the human body.

Part of a large-scale installation entitled *Eu, mestiço*, **Jonathas de Andrade's** (b. 1982) series of black-and-white photographs called *Menosprezo/Belittle, por Oristes* (2017) uses the body as a site to examine national identity and institutionalized racism in Brazil. Installed above text extracted from a 1952 anthropological study on Brazil by Columbia University and UNESCO, the images depict a model acting out inscribed racial identifiers.

One of the most significant artists to emerge in the late 1980s and early 1990s, **Felix Gonzalez-Torres** (1957–1996) explored the myriad ways objects can resonate with meaning, creating works that were at once specific and mutable, rigorous and generous, poetic and political. Despite the resolute abstraction of much of his oeuvre, many of the artist's works can be understood to directly implicate the body itself, including a number of images of imprints or traces of an absent subject. On view, *"Untitled" (Cold Blue Snow)* (1988) depicts footprints left in the snow.

Taking up the language of minimalist abstraction, **Jonah Groeneboer** (b. 1978) questions the relationship between seeing and knowing with thread sculptures that are nearly invisible from certain angles. While abstract, these lissome forms explore body politics in their insistent refusal of the viewer's gaze.

Likewise, **Gordon Hall's** (b. 1983) multipart installation and performance *Brothers and Sisters* (2018) engages sculptural abstraction as a way of indexing bodies. The work is composed of a set of precisely designed objects with ambiguous purpose, which Hall uses in a performance accompanied by four singers. Here, Hall creates site-responsive sculptures that explore issues surrounding transformation, self-care, and the rejection of visual taxonomies of personhood.

Oren Pinhassi's (b. 1985) large plaster and glass sculptures reference the architecture of gay cruising sites where the private and public intersect. The sculptures, corporeal and rough, invite viewers into a sensual landscape where bodies are simultaneously hidden and exposed. Pinhassi's work imagines the erotic potential of architecture and constructed spaces.

Few artists have shaped the scope of contemporary art and influenced a younger generation more than **Wolfgang Tillmans** (b. 1968). The portrait occupies a prominent position within Tillmans's oeuvre; he has mentioned that he approaches the genre with the same level of experimentation that he uses for his abstract pictures, and his subjects are sometimes presented in contexts that seem to approximate still lifes.

Elle Pérez (b. 1989) explores the complicated project of queer visibility through photographs embedded with subtle narrative codes. Seemingly ordinary objects, such as an eyelash, a bandana, or a swimsuit, are revealed to be a language of visual signifiers. *Binder* (2018), presented in the exhibition, depicts a gray chest binder hanging on a shower curtain rod.

Examining self-portraiture as a means of representation, **Paul Mpagi Sepuya's** (b. 1982) photographs feature staged objects, mirrors, and collages that visually fragment, or abstract, the artist's own form in an attempt to complicate presentations of the queer, black body. For Sepuya, self-portraiture is as much about disclosure as it is about concealment; the five photographs on view display his range of representation, including three works from 2018 created in collaboration with Grace Wales Bonner and Eric Mack for *i-D* magazine.

Christina Quarles (b. 1985) creates semi-figurative paintings that distort the human form as a means of capturing intersectional desire, and the experience of living as a queer-identifying African-American woman who is often mistaken as white. *Fell To Earth (Felt to Pieces)* (2018) depicts a hunched over figure with limbs extending in all directions; the work exemplifies Quarles's interest in the body as a locus of ambiguity.

Performances by Gordon Hall will take place on July 10 and July 24 at 6:30 PM. Space is limited; please contact Annie Lyall Slaughter at annielyall@davidzwirner.com, if you're interested in attending.

This Is Not a Prop is organized by Alec Smyth and Cristina Vere Nicoll.

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