

Michelle Carla Handel and Eve Wood at Garboushian Gallery



Let's delve into a weird place. Tunneling towards a mine of suppressed, latent, and untapped oddities, this rabbit hole burrows deep into the human psyche. Like a cognitive roll call, every repressed thought is buried here: the traumatically humiliating moment from your childhood, the impure dreams you had as a teen, and the irrational fears you disguise as an adult – this is a den in which the taboo hibernates. Rousing these dormant compulsions are [Michelle Carla Handel](#) and [Eve Wood](#) in their two-person exhibition at [Garboushian Gallery](#), *Your Mouth, Undone*, an inaugural exhibition for both artists at the space. As the title suggests, the show appears as if the stream to a collective consciousness doth runneth over – the previous barricade between social restraint and inhibition deteriorated in its wake. Immersed in this liberated visceral flood, Handel and Wood create this deluge's disturbingly alluring remains.

With a dexterous manipulation of industrial materials, Michelle Carla Handel transfigures wood, polyester fiberfill, muslin, silicone, rubber, urethane, vinyl and rope from the banal to the corporeal. She coyly references the dichotomous nature of her mediums – which are as easily used for commercial purposes as they are deviant – to evoke a purely visceral confrontation with our most lascivious associations.



"Private Dancer" (2011) – an unabashed pun in itself – gracefully dangles from the ceiling, a fabric and latex sling

allowing its fleshy form to take a suggestive bodily shape. As its southernmost point slouches towards the ground, one can't help recalling the flaccid, drooping realities of our most exposed selves. Tapping into a lineage of body politics, Handel employs a comical tone in her evaluation of beauty constructs, her deformed anatomies misshapen and vulnerable in their configurations.



"Vestigial Slump" (2011) is poised atop a wooden bar stool, as if casually gossiping with its viewer. Endearing in its awkwardly frank repose, the squid-like object also evokes the anatomical womb models used in "Reproduction 101," staging a blunt encounter with an otherwise cryptic issue territory and ownership. Seated, reclining, suspended, or bound, Handel's abstracted forms summon conflicting notions of the erotic and repellent, and evoke an instinctive grapple between the carnal and discriminating.



Eve Wood embraces a similarly fearless exploration of the subliminal and innermost cast of mind. Painted on seemingly raw wood panels, her paintings are ingeniously primeval. Elements of absurdism and phantasmagoria in her portraits forge a naked sincerity, as if traversing the non-sequiturs and anxiety rampant in our unencumbered dreamscapes. Wood's sharply rendered figures personify the illusion of control; illustrations of a shared plight to discern rationality from irrationality, and the lucid from the incoherent.



In “Avian Configuration I” (2012), an angular figure attempts to clutch his face – which is shrouded in a fluttering headdress of hummingbirds. Wood’s mastery lies in her resolute ambiguity, as her subject’s feathered infestation is indeterminately a captivating fantasy or phobia-induced nightmare. Another work, “Babies Are Born Every Day” (2012), depicts two disfigured males in hauntingly frail configurations. The first, his hunched belly spilling over weathered jeans, feebly rests his forearms on his knees – reddish stumps where absent hands should be. He appears dejected and unavailing; his internalized failure exaggerated by a similarly deformed, nude peer

compassionately gazing in his direction.



The two are futility incarnate – the progeny of insecurity and powerlessness’ incessant breeding. Through such a stark vignette, Wood spotlights the distress and apprehensions innate to our self-consciousness. Beyond mere vanity, she poignantly addresses our fleeting existence, the certainties that shape it, and our thwarted efforts to control it. Like Handel, Wood is privy to trifling with the fruitless – in mining the amusing, farcical, and often-stifled compulsive elements of the unconscious, both artists chaperone an earnest tour of the collectively bizarre human condition.

For more information on Michelle Carla Handel, or Eve Wood, please visit [Garboushian Gallery’s website](#).

