

Nevine Mahmoud,
Babe
16 Nov., 2024—25 Jan., 2025
Soft Opening at Paul Soto,
2271 West Washington
Blvd, Los Angeles

CACHE, BABE
Mary Walling Blackburn

Cache is trapper slang for hiding place. This gallery temporarily conceals Nevine Mahmoud's sculptures—slender beast parts and toys for human animals—all compressed by and into marble, metal, clay, and plastic. Driven together, they are a faunal amalgamate. They exist beyond or after reproduction. With assists—poles and shelves and armatures—these sculptures cling to the manic aftershock of quasi-biblical begats, in other words, maybe these animistic forms incessantly seek out their birth origins: *Are you my real father? Is Nanny Mommy? Why is the dog my half-brother? Do I share DNA with this deer?* Presently, the work is lodged at a juncture, somehow situated between the Psychoanalytic Turn and the Surrealist Turn.

After reproduction: I am reminded of the pristine, postmenopausal white couches of early 1980s Brentwood—snowy parts in pale interior light—where women in white pants might lounge. Their bodies never bled; someone else sheds blood elsewhere. Lo! Down the street—there's Tom Selleck waving his trowel in his garden! It is hard to recognize him because he's shaved his moustache! And where did the moustache go—into which trapper's cache? Not Mahmoud's! Her beast amalgamates—these half-abortive creatures—are smooth, cervine ghosts. But perhaps the gallery swivels from cache to a liminal zone where sculptures gather, wraith-like, in truncated gallery-time.

Remember Mahmoud's *Josefine* (2023): a fetal deer is positioned on the floor as if its deer mother has truly miscalculated and stowed her fawn in a gallery—but so rosy is that marble that it dashes any notion that this is corpse or headstone—it is flush with life.

Soft Opening,

Although Mahmoud's reference point is the victimized titular character in a cruel and predatory Fin-de-siecle Viennese novel by Felix Salten (originator of Bambi), an extra mammalian slippage might occur—this is piglet, too. The phrase “off the pig” unfurls in my head and suddenly this sculpture has shed its Old European cervine identity for that of an American swine (the assaulted babe morphs into assaulting *Babe*) and strobe-like, *Josefine* keeps flexing between between tender and obscene. This Babe is how America materializes its tyranny; but in this form, the tyranny feels cute enough to be manageable. I love this ruse, this brutal confusion — it doesn't allow for any resolution. This way, the object endlessly refreshes itself. I can't abandon this fawn or roast this pig.

I am staring at pink marble cuts, imagining Ojai's Pink Moment. I am remembering something about Andre Breton referring to a *Pink Death* and I am conjuring Adorno in LA, sunburned to a flambe. I know there's a spotted red raspberry slime mold (*Tubifera ferruginosa*) in Pasadena and on the UCLA campus, a fresh slime mold that could be mistaken in a stony moment for a nest of severed rose-tinted thumbs: *Acyria stipata*, folk name: “Lost Hitchhikers”? When I was a kid, our mothers and step mothers made it seem that this California was also Serial Killer Country and the slime mold assists with that.

After, in the infinite real, a sculpture that is also a sleek shelf pierced by a delicate ear-thing will be anchored into a wall. On the other side of the wall might be canyons and canyon deer listening for guns and fire, but only hearing the electric slide of a pool cover — the buzz of a drone deferred. Perhaps the she-collector has bifurcated her gaze — one eye focused on Mahmoud's sculpture and the other on the window — simulacrum in stereo. The he-collector is having an honest reckoning at/ with sundown — both human and art object are interior beasts in the last light. Outside, amongst the exterior things, mountain lions are gene-trapped, lassoed together by freeways. P-12 takes a bite and an actual stag springs a leak. By morning, an undigested hoof crowns his scat. He shits sculpture, or as Mahmoud describes several of her works in this show — *anti-trophies*. Together, in parallel, the mountain lion and the artist are violently subtracting and adding... until the hills are studded with anti-trophies for the anti-heroes, scorched but whole.

Gallery (L–R)

Stiffffforest 1&2, 2024
Found plastic,
aluminum pipe
Dimensions variable

Decollates pair, blanched,
2024
Marble, wood, paint
21 × 60 × 11 ½ inches

Carouselle, 2024
Marble dust, polyester
resin, aluminium hardware
58 ½ × 47 × 50 inches

Angels throat (black), 2024
Belgian black marble
6 ½ × 4 ½ × 5 inches

Angels throat (pink), 2024
Portuguese pink marble
6 ½ × 4 ½ × 5 inches

Dark Fawn, 2024
Bronze, patina,
aluminum hardware
17 × 19 × 22 inches

Office (L–R)

Surrogates, 2024
Wax, wood
9 × 9 × 9 inches

Head, 2024
Portuguese marble,
bronze, plastic
16 ½ × 76 × 11 ¾ inches

Nevine Mahmoud (b. 1988, London) lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include *Collapse* at Soft Opening at CFA, Milan (2023) with Maren Karlson; *in mass and feeling* at Soft Opening, London (2022); *MATRIX 188* at Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut (2022); *Nevine Mahmoud* at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Barnsdall Art Park, Los Angeles (2021). Selected group exhibitions include *Rayon Jouets* at Hangar Y, Paris; *Cremona Art Week* at Museo Archeologico San Lorenzo, Cremona (2024); *Whisper Their Sinful Names* at Chez Max et Dorothea, Los Angeles (2024); *perfectly round, as we left them* at the Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro in Milan (2021) and *Romancing the Mirror* at MOCA Jacksonville, Florida (2020). Mahmoud's work is held in the permanent collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.