

human form, after that “[they] are so rigid that they become uncomfortable.” Depending on the chemical formula, the chair becomes a sculpture, a piece of design, or more simply remains a chair. Rather than defining his practice, or defining his output, Pesce lets the chemical formula — how things turn out — define each object.

For an exhibition at Collective design fair, New York, in 2013, Pesce had an assistant develop a scent that would fill the room; the air surrounding his furniture, sculptures, architectural designs, and sketches was full of the warm flavours of minestrone, meant to represent his multi-faceted output (and the many flavours required to make a good soup). In an interview about the show, Pesce told a reporter: “If I can try to give a name to the materials of our time, it would be feminine: translucent, soft, warm, colourful, sensual.” Like the ponds of pigment and resin, he defined the material of our time as liquid: “Our historical moment is liquid. We have values that one day go up, down, like the wave of the water.”

Words by
Billie Muraben

Credits: Gaetano Pesce, Pratt chair, 1984, polyurethane. Chair courtesy of Design Museum Brussels. Photograph by Jeroen Bocken, commissioned for Out in the World with Gaetano Pesce by Museum Books.

THE PESCE PRINT PROJECT. A series of five numbered edition photographic prints, featuring unpublished images captured for Out in the World with Gaetano Pesce. Published by Museum Books is available via museumbooks.net. Each print is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity, signed and numbered by the photographer.

MURABEN BILLIE MURABEN BILLIE MURABEN BILLIE MURABEN

Interview by Lara Monro

Louise
Bonnet

Born 1970

Your exaggerated forms exist in timeless capsules, navigating a push and pull between the beautiful and the ugly. Are you questioning traditional notions of beauty?

Not really, my work isn't about what is beautiful or what is ugly. I make no judgment in that way at all, the figures in the paintings are, first of all, usually all representations of myself, I make no claims on anyone else and secondly, I am trying to represent what living inside a body feels like, or making feelings and

I really am ok with the work leaving my personal space, but if I think about all the works as one abstract entity, then I have very warm feelings towards it, yes.

Your precise observation of the tension and movements of body parts makes me wonder whether you people watch to gain inspiration for your work?

Yes! Definitely. It's always interesting to see an unconscious reaction manifesting in someone's behaviour.



Studio Images by Jeff McLane, Courtesy Gagolian

sensations visible, bring them out in the physical world and the body is a good instrument for this, what we are thinking is usually transferred to it in some way.

I read that you treat your figures with a measure of dignity. Do you find that you become attached to them?

Painting is the best thing that's ever happened to me and I couldn't dream of doing anything else, but it's also pretty tense and terrifying and by the time I am done with what I wanted to express,

By placing so much focus on the body are you connecting with your own?

I wasn't for a long time, I was separating it completely from myself, I was what was inside my body, but it was an unrelated vehicle that I happened to be in. It creates all sorts of problems because I didn't understand that anxiety will manifest as physical trouble, for example, and I had terrible panic attacks I think, because of it. I wonder if this disconnect is related also to the fact that as a woman or girl, your appearance, your body is so objec-

tified and judged and so many rules go along with having a female appearance that don't match who you are inside, that it makes it hard to bond with it. The whole Judeo-Christian mythology is also so bizarre when it comes to the body, you have to hide it, any pleasure from it is bad, you have to have control over it, but then you also eat Jesus', and the main symbol of Christianity is an instrument of atrocious physical torture. It's just very confusing.

Your forms appear to be in disturbing discomfort, which suggests an uneasy state of mind. What is their suffering a reflection of?

What I find interesting are emotions that are raw and hard to describe. Embarrassment or shame for example, but what I mean by shame is mostly little everyday humiliations that strip the person of artifice, I don't mean trauma, which is a completely different thing and not what I take pleasure or have the gravitas to be able to depict. I am also as interested in all the things we do to disguise these feelings. Humans expended a lot of brain power and ingenuity in concocting little cantilevered baskets for breasts because they couldn't be seen jiggling unattractively or is it too attractively? It's always hard to tell.

Your compositions traverse the civilised world and baser human impulses, highlighting that only the thinnest veneer of propriety within everyday life masks the grotesque from view. Is this your exploration into the subconscious?

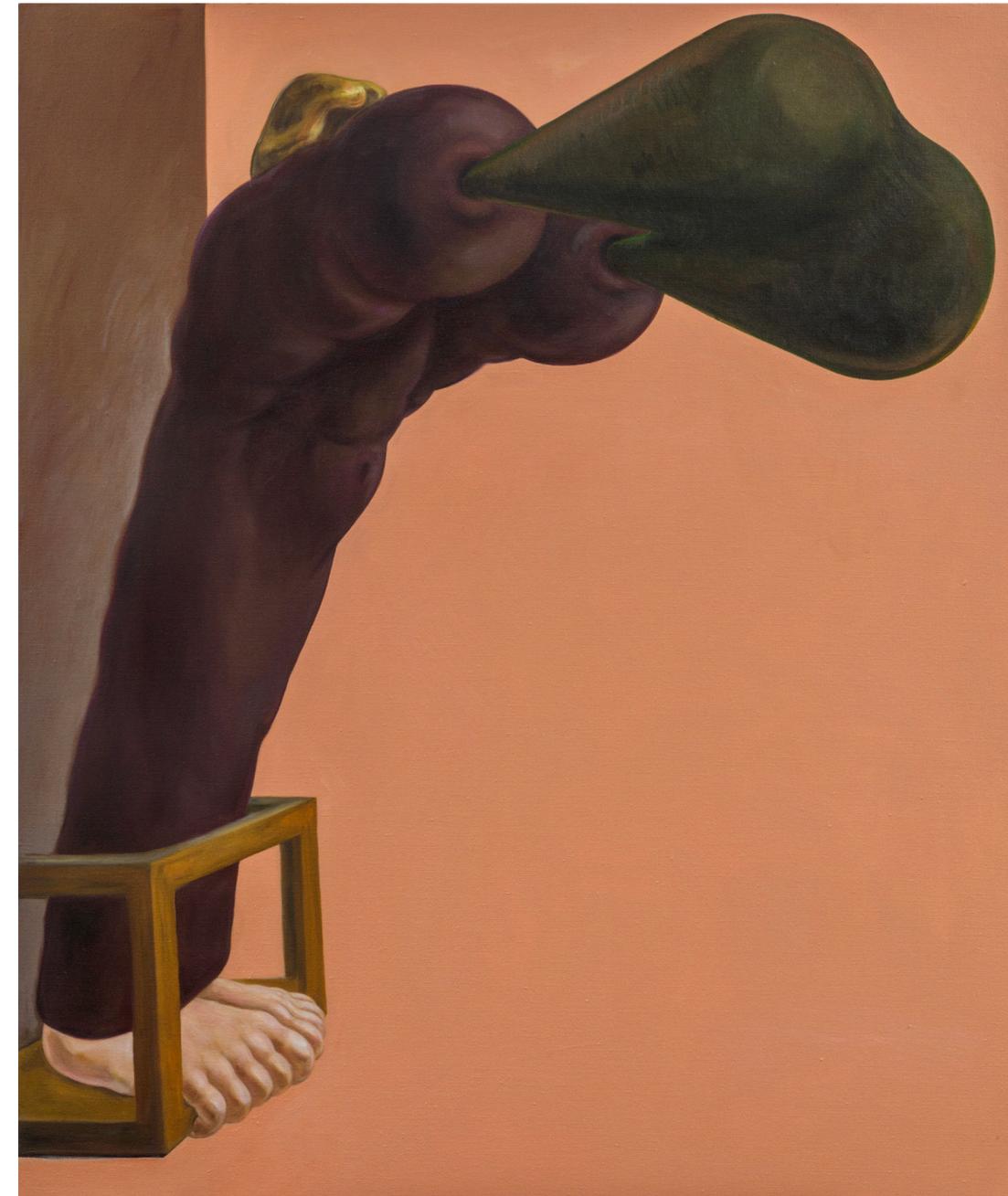
I think there is power in what could be thought as being the monster, the monstrous, especially when you spent too much time trying to conform to structures and rules made for you by a power who's main concern is to control you. And the thin veneer is interesting, since it's always about to crack.

Reading is an important part of your process; helping you to structure what you are thinking. Are there specific books you



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Projection 3, 2022, 213.4 x 177.8 cm, © Louise Bonnet
Photo: Joshua White, Courtesy Gagosian



Purple Pantyhose, 2022, Oil on linen, 213.4 x 177.8 cm, © Louise Bonnet
Photo: Jeff McLane, Courtesy Gagosian



Projection 2, 2022, Oil on linen, 213.4 x 365.8 cm, © Louise Bonnet
Photo: Joshua White, Courtesy Gagosian



Red Pantyhose, 2022, Oil on linen, 213.4 x 177.8 cm, © Louise Bonnet
Photo: Jeff McLane, Courtesy Gagosian



return to for reference or are you always looking for new material?

I keep going back to Kristeva and “On Ugliness” by Umberto Eco. Adam, my husband, just gave me Kier-La Janisse’s “House of Psychotic Women” An Autobiographical Topography of Female Neurosis in Horror and Exploitation Films, and it’s fantastic.

Is there a particular reason why most of your works have one, solitary protagonist?

Usually what I am trying to visualize is internal, so it doesn’t really need multiple interactions.

Can you tell me why sex is represented by manic exaggeration and physical restraint in your work?

I actually am not sure that I ever depict sex. I understand that the finished work might read that way, but it is never what is driving a painting, instead it is about what it feels like to have a body that is out of control or forced into control or what the body does to its environment and vice versa, clothes, etc. and how we try to display it or make it conform. I know that the result can be a turn on, which is totally fine, but it’s definitely never the goal. But again, anything that will make things more uncomfortable, I welcome with open arms!

Your figures often appear genderless. Are you intentionally subverting traditional power structures through this approach?

Well, again, the figures are all versions of me, of my unconscious. And in my

head, gender is not always at the front, which maybe is a way of saying that I do want to subvert traditional power structures, because it may be subversive to express a woman’s innate feelings that have nothing to do about her gender in the outwardly, binary sense of it? I guess it is true that women are rarely depicted without their sexual attributes. I only include the breasts and sex organs if it adds to the idea that I am trying to convey, like what having a body that features these attributes does to the figure or its surroundings, for example, but sometimes it just detracts from the message, like in real life.

How do you know when a work is complete?

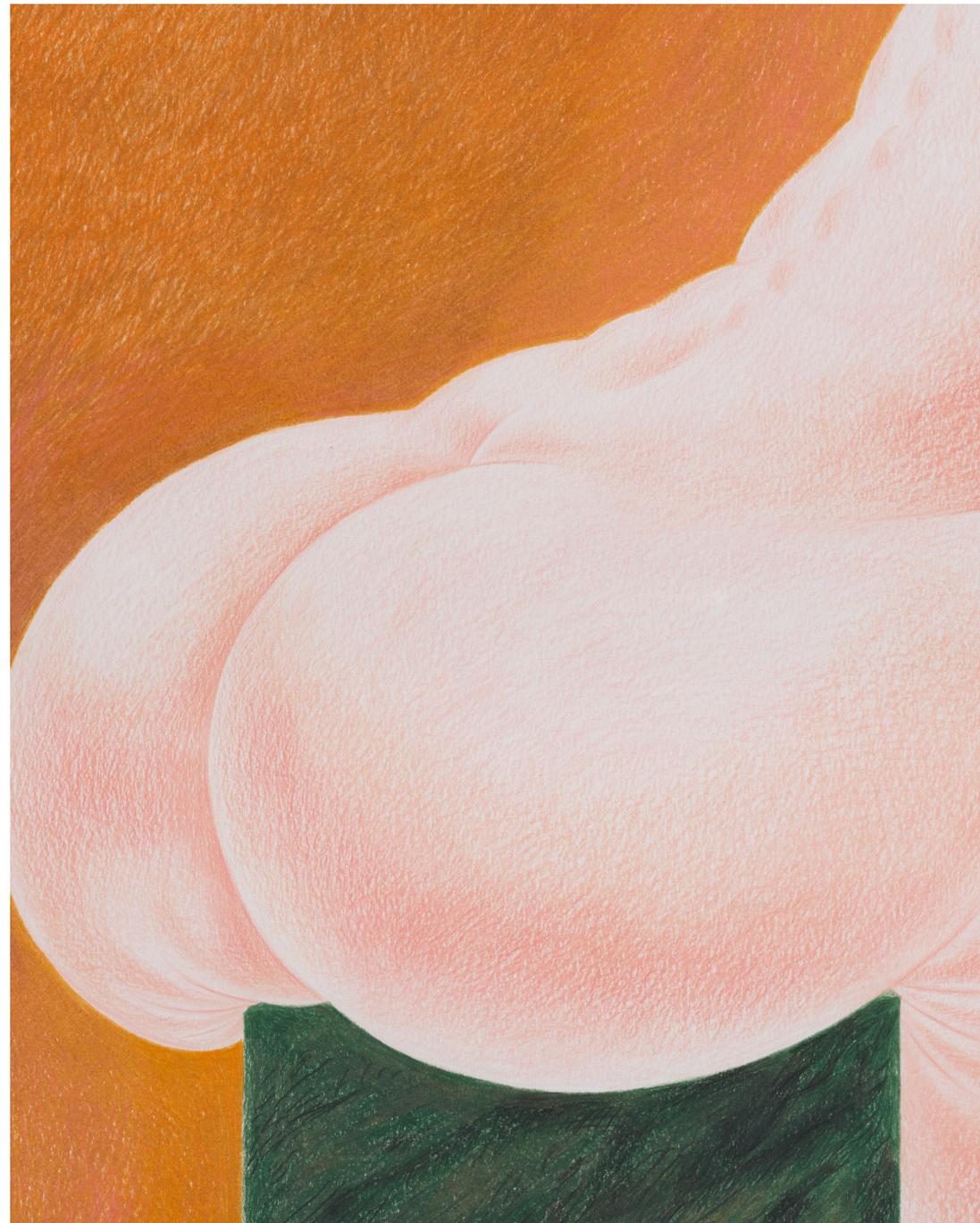
When I can think to myself, whatever happens, I did the best I possibly could at this time.

Green Pantyhose, Oil on linen, 213.4 x 365.8 cm, © Louise Bonnet
Photo: Jeff McLane, Courtesy Gagosian

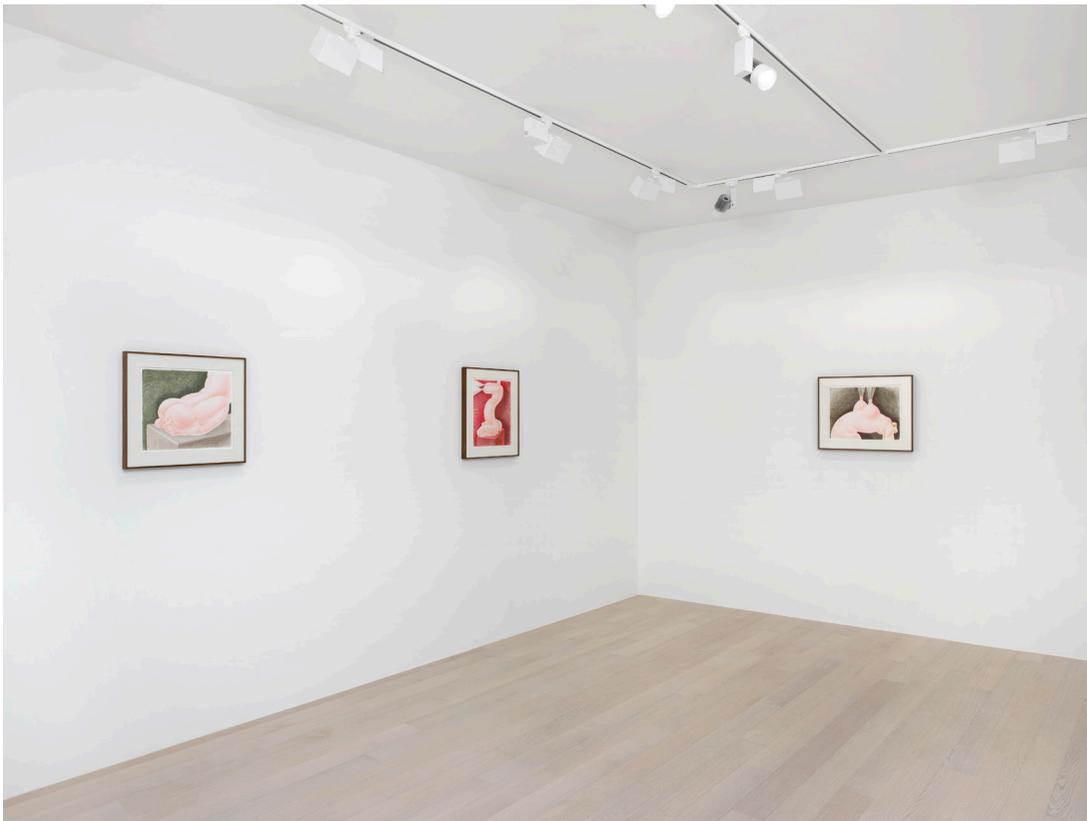




Sphinxes, 2021, Installation view, Features: Heroica, 2021, Colored pencil on paper, 35.6 x 43.2 cm
 © Louise Bonnet. Photo: Annik Wetter. Courtesy Gagolian.



Seated Green Marble, 2021, Colored pencil on paper, 61 x 48.3 cm, (unframed)
 © Louise Bonnet. Photo: Jeff McLane. Courtesy Gagolian.



Sphinxes, Installation view, © Louise Bonnet. Photo: Annik Wetter. Courtesy Gagosian.



Sphinxes, 2021, Installation view, Features: Kneeling Sphinx 2, 2021, Oil on linen, 76.2 x 101.6 cm (unframed) © Louise Bonnet. Photo: Annik Wetter. Courtesy Gagosian.



Kneeling Sphinx 2, 2021, Oil on linen, 76.2 x 101.6 cm (unframed)
© Louise Bonnet. Photo: Jeff McLane. Courtesy Gagosian.



Sphinxes, 2021, Installation view, Features: Seated Sphinx Pink Marble, 2021, Colored pencil on paper, 61 x 48.3 cm (unframed) © Louise Bonnet. Photo: Annik Wetter. Courtesy Gagosian.

*Christopher Wool at
Xavier Hufkens
2 June — 30 July 2022*



Portrait by Oliver Abraham, Courtesy the Artist and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels.

**Christopher
Wool**