



Andra Ursuța, *Succubustin' Loose* (detail), 2019, lead crystal, 46 × 18 × 13".

Andra Ursuta

RAMIKEN

Victims of pleasure, vehicles for pain: Human bodies tend to be at the mercy of violent desires—their own and those of others—in the work of Andra Ursuta. The artist has created X-ray-esque images of bound figures being sodomized by carrots, and once exhibited a blackened cast of her naked self, gaunt and collapsed like a peat-bog mummy, and splattered with suggestive white silicone. Sometimes her targets are implied: *Stoner*, 2013, involves a batting-cage pitching machine hurling rocks at a tiled wall with long hair emerging from the cracks. But if Ursuta has been dredging dark streams of consciousness for years, her discoveries never took such luminous, seductive form as in this recent exhibition.

At Ramiken, Ursuta's new work, a tribe of gorgeous cast-glass sculptures that combine pieces of the artist's body and inanimate objects, served as monuments to mortification. In *Yoga Don't Help* (all works 2019) Ursuta's head juts from the base of an erect torso with exposed viscera and stubby arms. She gazes up at the mutant extension, apparently reconciled to its presence and authority, while another smooth, nearly featureless face at the top stares ahead, apparently unconcerned with its human host. The stocky figure called *Succubustin' Loose* struck a jaunty contrapposto atop a cinder-block plinth. Its saggy trunk and head, supported by big, geometric-looking boots, are derived from a flaccid bondage suit and gimp mask, sprouting a nozzle. The hollow statues, with their crystal flesh stained glacial blue and absinthe green, seemed to emit their own icy light, as though Ursuta had bottled the aurora borealis. These sculptures might have been familiar—Ursuta presented clear versions holding fingers of liquor at the 2019 Venice Biennale, but their tight grouping on a platform there shortchanged their individual powers. Here, the new works commanded their own discrete regions of Ramiken's cavernous Brooklyn warehouse, and the time it took to go from one effigy to the next amplified their eerie magnetism. Approaching each piece became an act of supplication, as though the viewer had come to pay them homage or make offerings.

These hybrid totems were, like the monster children of an experimental surgery, born out of a tortuous process involving old and new techniques. Ursuta began by 3-D-scanning old clothes and fetish wear stuffed with foam, flotsam from her studio, and her own face and figure. After digitally grafting everything together, she printed the mutant forms in hard plastic and created molds. These led to wax models, which were then cast in colored glass. Her methods capture fine details—the interlocking teeth of a crotch zipper, crisp folds of pleated fabric, the tentacle hair of two Halloween masks, and shredded cardboard ridges (the packing material delightfully, sordidly known as “void fill”). Each work was a study in unexpected contrasts, between rock-hard glass and doughy shape, between contemporary content (cyborgs, mass-produced junk, sci-fi) and art history (some pieces vaguely resembled Brancusi's standing figures—but Ursuta looks back at her modernist forebears with an Oedipal leer).

Artists have been mashing up high and low culture for more than a century, but the barriers between these realms have become tissue thin. Ursuta's mongrels felt like fitting idols for

an age when one can go online and browse disasters on the other side of the world while reading a sonnet, clicking on an ad, and watching pornography that would shock even one's most open-minded friends. There was an air of triumphant inevitability about these works, as though it were only a matter of time before this information overload took corporeal form and reminded us that, indeed, it is the master and we are the slaves.

— Zoë Lescaze

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