

BROADWAY



Martha Friedman

**15 Jun 2018 — 10 Feb 2019 at the Henry Art Gallery in
Seattle, United States**

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Martha Friedman. Courtesy of Henry Art Gallery

In the exhibition *Castoffs*, sculptor Martha Friedman (U.S., born 1975) presents a new group of figurative sculptures that engage in a process of making and unmaking the body, challenging imposed logics that attempt to neatly contain or define it. Working with choreographer and dancer Silas Riener, Friedman created concrete casts from her collaborator's idealized male form and then assembled the resulting distorted parts with metal armatures and spikes, as well as tubing and sheeting made of rubber. The result is a body dissected, a series of

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ambiguous parts that resist a totalizing, easily categorizable whole. Dispersed across a grid of pedestals, these hybrid sculptures are imbued with a tension between reverence for the virtuosic male body and a distrust of its idealized stature, a yearning to break with gendered hierarchies as well as to interrogate sculptural histories proceeding from Classical antiquity.

Interspersed among the concrete cast sculptures are blown-glass finger forms positioned in a gesture that evokes the act of “fingering” or penetration. These sculptures were inspired by Egyptian two-finger amulets that were placed at the site of incision after embalming to protect the integrity of the body in the afterlife. Friedman’s fingers repurpose their ancient forerunners to probe the gallery space and symbolically hold open the possibility of undoing the body and the social and cultural constructs that constitute it.

Across Friedman’s work is an interest in processes and materials that evoke the pleasures, anxieties, and vulnerabilities of having a body. Friedman’s playful and humorous early work of enlarged versions of commonplace items such as nails and waffles has in recent years evolved a sharper edge, both literally and metaphorically, engaging with the entangled relations between agency and constraint, embodiment and dissociation, violence and desire. Recent solo exhibitions of Friedman’s work have been held at The Institute of Fine Arts Great Hall, New York (Some Hags, 2016-2017); Locust Projects, Miami, FL (Pour, 2015-2016); and Wallspace, New York (Caught, 2012), among others. She was the recipient of a 2017 Visiting Artist Fellowship at Urban Glass, Brooklyn, and the recipient of a 2016 National Endowment for the Arts grant in collaboration with Susan Marshall & Company. Friedman earned her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her MFA from Yale University School of Art. Friedman is a senior lecturer and Director of the Visual Arts Program at Princeton University. She lives and works in Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

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All photos courtesy of Martha Friedman and Henry Art Gallery