

Art in America

EXHIBITIONS THE LOOKOUT



Elizabeth Jaeger

at Jack Hanley
through Apr. 16
327 Broome Street

“The problem of woman,” André Breton wrote in 1929, “is the most marvelous and disturbing problem in all the world.” Elizabeth Jaeger’s ceramic and steel sculptures (all 2017) in “Pommel,” her second solo exhibition at Jack Hanley, confront the marvelous and disturbing aspects of this problem elegantly, and directly. Twelve white, nude female torsos, each propped on its side by two steel beams, recline like odalisques. The works conjure the serene statues of ancient Greece, Ingres’s languid beauties, and Surrealists’ photographic experiments with the female nude (Man Ray’s famous *Le Violon d’Ingres*, 1924, comes to mind).

The title of the show refers to the curved part of a saddle, or the pommel horse, a type of vault in gymnastics. This association is sexual, but also formal. The torsos mimic athletic gear, and suggest dressage, an intimate subjugation. The twelve works are nearly identical, although each has a unique title that alludes to hollow shells (*Carapace, Hull, Pommel, Saddle, Shell*) or coverings (*Towel, Wrapper, Throw, Sheath, Cloak, Sleeve, Blanket*). The works are refined objects of the objectified, offering critical distance to a subject that invokes intense and polarizing reactions, like Breton’s, of awe and agitation. Facing forward in a shallow, military formation, the silent cuirass army, while headless, stare at the viewer confrontationally, as if heralding a new world.

—Julia Wolkoff

Pictured: View of Elizabeth Jaeger's exhibition "Pommel," 2017, at Jack Hanley. Photo Oto Gillen.

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