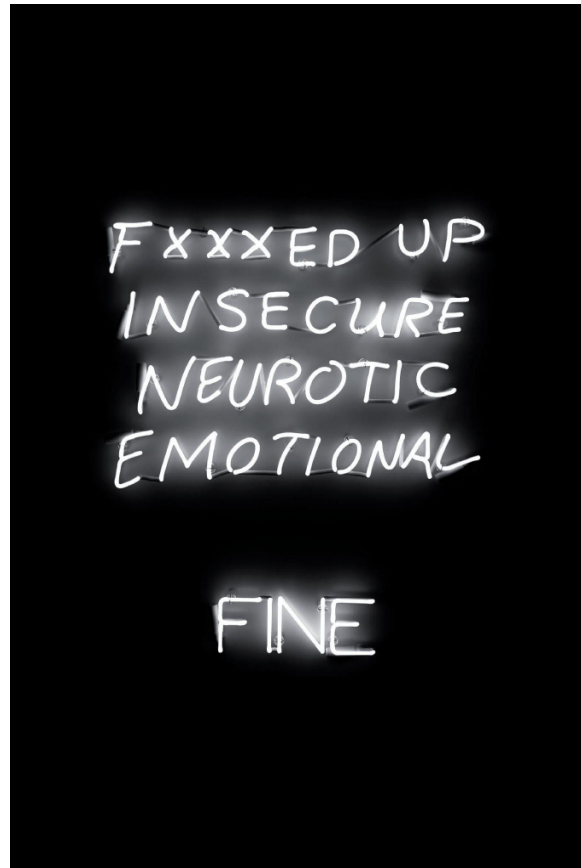


RACHEL LEE HOVNANIAN

PERCEPTION

Open Studio **December 6-8, 2023**
Miami Beach, Florida



Rachel Lee Hovnanian, *FINE*, 2014

This Miami Art Week, renowned conceptual artist **Rachel Lee Hovnanian** opens the doors to her new studio, with an intimate presentation of artworks from her oeuvre to date. A collaboration with curator **Bakul Patki**, *Perception* takes a fresh look at works that explore how we see and judge ourselves, paradoxes of beauty, and the struggles inherent in the pursuit of success.

Artist Rachel Lee Hovnanian says,

"Transforming a first-floor office space in Miami Beach into my art studio has been a wild ride. I've carved out a creative sanctuary and playground where every room reflects a different ongoing project. This space, nestled away from the ocean's edge, is very different from any studio I have ever worked in."

Miami inspires, art breathes, and every room hums with diverse energies. Opening the doors of the studio along with the vision of dynamic London Curator Bakul Patki feels like the perfect launch, and an opportunity to present a thought-provoking exploration of perception and reality."

Yearning for a space in which she could freely experiment and play at scale, **Hovnanian** has gutted a 6000ft² office in the heart of Miami Beach, recommissioning it as just such a site. The main room has

been reimagined as a sculpture garden, inspired by the Italian landscapes where the artist often works and has regularly exhibited, including as part of Venice Biennale 2022. Using synthetic fauna, **Hovnanian** again plays with the idea of perfection and the lengths we go to achieve it. Photographs from the **'Too Good To Be True'** series and a number of **'Narcissus'** reliefs are installed throughout the studio. And as a professional espresso barista takes up residence, the artist is offering a calm, convivial escape from the intense bustle of the fairs, inviting the curious to join her there for coffee, cantucci and conversation.

Curator Bakul Patki says,

"I'm delighted to be working with Rachel on the inaugural project in her new studio. It's been a real pleasure diving more deeply into her work, which intelligently and insightfully interrogates the personal, political and societal pressures that influence identities - particularly those of women. The gutted office has become a canvas for Rachel's cathartic expression - a physical and metaphorical breaking apart of constructs that have confined and defined women throughout time.

It's been fascinating to learn more about Rachel's experiences growing up as a tomboy who didn't conform to expectations of being the 'perfect girl' and later, having graduated from art school, as an Art Director working on beauty accounts at McCann Erickson. Experiences that inform and contextualise the wry commentary running through a practice that consistently throws a spotlight on the role beauty and perceived beauty play - whether as a means of controlling women or enabling them to take back control.

Some of the works presented in Perception have not been seen in the US before, and most have never been exhibited together. By bringing this selection together now, my hope is that viewers will connect with individual pieces and the exhibition as a whole, in new and meaningful ways - that the stories Rachel tells through her art will resonate even more profoundly."

Pieces dotted throughout the garden include a previously-unseen **'Body Armor'** sculpture, from the series of the same name, which explores how feminine beauty has been the main avenue through which women could gain power in America's male-led society. Forged from bronze, the work draws a parallel between medieval battle armor and the bathing suit - articles of clothing that are associated with self-augmentation and pageantry.

A pair of 8ft tall **'Beauty Queen Totems'** - supersized manifestations of characters that recur in the artist's work - stand guard. Placing such dominant female figures in this context becomes a symbolic act - reclaiming space and dismantling historical power struggles that have overshadowed women in both the art world and corporate spheres.

As the studio and presentation took shape, **Hovnanian** and **Patki** worked closely together to realise an exhibition that examines the impact of patriarchal masculinity on female identity, the journey from narcissism to body modification and transhumanism, and - the predominant theme in the artist's practice - the urgency to share our stories.



Rachel Lee Hovnanian, *Body Armor*, 2023



Rachel Lee Hovnanian, *Beauty Queen Totem*, 2009

**PERCEPTION BY RACHEL LEE HOVNANIAN
STUDIO PRESENTATION OF WORKS FOR MIAMI ART WEEK 2023 - CURATED BY BAKUL PATKI**

Dec 6-8, 2023 from 10am-1pm daily and by appointment
Rachel Lee Hovnanian Studio
Entrance on the corner of 26th and Miami Beach Drive
RSVP@studioRLH.com

Perception completes a trio of presentations in Florida this December, with Hovnanian's work also being exhibited by County Gallery at Untitled Art Fair, and as part of 'The Divine Feminine: Contemporary Women Sculptors', at the Ann Norton Sculpture Park, Palm Beach.

For further information, images or interview requests, please contact **Daniel Bee**:
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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Rachel Lee Hovnanian's multidisciplinary practice explores the complexities of modern feminism through the lens of our cultural obsession with beauty and narcissism, eliciting conversations around contemporary ideals regarding physical perfection and the compounding psychological effects of new media and technology.

In 2022, Hovnanian was invited to produce a solo exhibition for the Venice Biennale, for which the artist presented *Angel's Listening*. Hovnanian's interactive performance-installation created space for hundreds of silenced voices to join together in a chorus of confessions, celebrating the liberation associated with catharsis and demonstrating the sanctity of meditative environments in periods of shared isolation.

Hovnanian's work has been exhibited at private and public institutions across the globe, including solo presentations in the United States, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. She received her BFA from the University of Texas, Austin, and completed postgraduate studies at the Parsons School of Design in New York. Born in Parkersburg, West Virginia, and raised in Houston, Texas, Hovnanian currently lives between Miami and New York.

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RACHEL LEE HOVNANIAN

ABOUT BAKUL PATKI

Bakul Patki is freelance curator, creative producer and cultural consultant with over two decades experience - specialising in fine art, photography, design and architecture - often collaborating with practitioners from theatre, dance, music, film, and the rapidly evolving tech disciplines. Bakul works independently and for organisations to devise, develop and deliver projects with individual artists, studios, institutions, festivals, and charities, as well as brands who have an interest in working with and supporting creativity.

Past exhibitions include, *'No But Where Are You Really From?'* – a group show across 5000 billboards and digital screens in the UK, *'QUELLE JOUR SOMMES-NOUS?'* – an off-site project in Kassel, Germany, during Documenta 15, *'Future Classics'* a group show at the Museum of Fine Art, Budapest, and *'Amazon'* - an exhibition of photographs by *Sebastião Salgado and Per-Anders Pettersson*, at Somerset House, London and The Photo Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

Bakul is regularly invited to host talks, and writes about art, most recently contributing an essay to the forthcoming monograph on Chila Kumari Singh Burman, to be published by Tate in 2024.