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Maude Maris  1/6
by Mara Hoberman,
curator, art writer
and editor

 Paris, France



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Maude Maris's multi-step creative process begins at the flea market or antique shop, where she sources small treasures like animal figurines, sea shells and other eclectic baubles. She uses these objects to create molds for plaster casts, which she later tints with various inks. She then arranges the resulting multi-colored statuettes into three-dimensional compositions—rotating, inverting and reflecting one or more casts and until they barely resemble the objects on which they are based—and snaps a photo. Finally, looking at these



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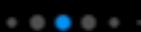


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photographs, she paints.

The finished paintings are intensely, but pleasantly disorienting, due to the fact that Maris uses a hyper-realistic style to depict unrecognizable subjects. While we are impressed by her masterful representations of reflections, depth, volume and texture, we remain perplexed by what, precisely, we are looking at. Fossils, gem stones, architectural ruins or perhaps body parts? Even to a viewer who is aware that Maris's paintings are the final



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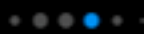


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stage of a multi-step physical and conceptual metamorphosis, her realistic renderings appear undeniably abstract. Reconciling this peculiar nexus of figuration and abstraction requires a combination of narrative interpretation and formal analysis.

For the past few weeks Maris has subjected her work to yet another transformation. Digitized for Instagram, her paintings recede even further from reality as they lose their sense of scale and facture. Luminous, smooth, handheld and yet fleeting, the



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Instagrammed paintings become part of a virtual experience that inherently privileges imagery over materiality. But while it is tempting to think of this dematerialization as a further progression in Maris's practice, this is not in fact the direction she is headed. Quite to the contrary, Maris's most recent work is newly and notably haptic—featuring pink, red and peachy impastos that evoke raw meat. Examples will soon be on view, in the flesh, in the artist's first solo show at Praz Delavallade, Paris ("Hiéromancie," February 20–April 10, 2021).



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This body of work would have also been at home in a 2009 exhibition titled "Flesh Made Paint" (Frist Art Museum; Phillips Collection), which featured carnal paintings by the likes of Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Jenny Saville and Cecily Brown. Even without explicitly referencing the body, Maris follows a painterly tradition that pushes the medium beyond mimesis and towards a visceral reality.

Mara Hoberman, 2021



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