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Travis Diehl
Louise Bonnet and Elizabeth
King: *De Anima*
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GALLERIES

Louise Bonnet and Elizabeth King

Through Sept. 9. Swiss Institute,
38 St. Marks Place, Manhattan;
212-925-2035, swissinstitute.net.

This show greets you with a wave: a wooden hand in a display case. The sculpture, "Bartlett's Left Hand" by Elizabeth King, is a coy introduction to an exhibition of the artist's intricate human maquettes, and a skeletal preview of the other work in the show, by Louise Bonnet, whose focus here is paintings of fleshy and even corpulent nudes.

It's a dynamic pairing. King's precisely carved and hinged wood and brass anatomical models strike vaudeville poses in their vitrines, offering a mechanical contrast to Bonnet's nearly abstract, curvaceous figures rendered in warbling impasto. The models are pinned in place, while the nudes seem to tumble.

At its most obvious, the show is a study of the human figure, but it's also a study of how armatures, frames and props can lend bodies emotive power. The maquettes owe their expressive postures to the care with which every joint, has been organically calibrated. King has given these slender prosthetic digits intense study, as seen in a stop-motion animation in which a puppet seems awed by its ability to wiggle and clasp. In the same room, two wooden arms and hands in a spotlighted glass case cast swanlike shadows on the wall.

The fact that these figures are inanimate doesn't limit their range. Instead it gives them some frisson, as their apparent liveness clashes with their inertia. In one airy example, "Untitled Articulated Figure" (1974-78), a doll's head has hair, eyes, painted lips, and the face of middle age; but the body is a realistic human



VIA LOUISE BONNET, GAGOSIAN AND SWISS INSTITUTE



VIA ELIZABETH KING AND SWISS INSTITUTE.
PHOTO BY DANIEL PÉREZ.

Top, Louise Bonnet's "Bra 2" (2025), a painting at Swiss Institute. Above, a detail of Elizabeth King's "Untitled Articulated Figure" (1974-78), made of porcelain, copper-plated steel, bronze, glass and hair.

skeleton. It's macabre, and also funny, playing with our expectations of what's under a puppet's clothes.

The longer you linger with the work, the more you notice how the show revels in visual echoes and illusions. Each glass case reflects and filters the room, from a nearby painting of a bulbous backside and vase, "Pants"

(2025), to the people passing outside the building's windows.

The upstairs gallery strips back the skin of King's process, displaying maquette parts, such as an untitled collection of glass eyes on rods. "How to Make a Thumb" (2008) is a sequence of wooden plugs, carved to increasing degrees, illustrating the evolution of raw wood into lifelike artifice. Here, with subtler competition, Bonnet's paintings dominate. A pattern emerges: Each painting has a contorted white nude in counterpoint with a household object, the face out of frame, almost always truncated by a dark shape.

In "Bra 1" (2025), the figure clasps its breasts against its chest with one forearm, while a studded milk-glass vase of daisies echoes their anatomy. "Shoe" (2025) features a similarly creamy female figure, doubled over in a collision of fingers and toes, with a trapezoidal black screen across her face. In the background, two lemons on a branch evoke breasts, but also eyes gawking at this impossibly folded model. Bonnet's paintings are experiments in redaction and compression.