

Valérie Blass

Born 1967 in Montreal; lives in Montreal

Pronouns: she, her, hers

In her assemblage sculptures Valérie Blass combines figurative and abstract styles that complicate our understanding of the body and, by extension, eroticism and intimacy. Fragmented bodies, often appearing to be in motion, draw meaning as much from absence as from presence. Blass makes plaster casts of models in her studio, adds garish garments and mundane items, and then removes limbs, torsos, and heads to mold strange invisible figures. In her darkly funny and sometimes disturbing sculptures, she encourages misunderstandings and embraces double meanings, rendering human forms inanimate and anthropomorphizing objects. Her sculptures are replete with references to modern art—including Surrealism, Cubism, Futurism, and Dada—as well as to the remains of ancient statues, with their missing parts and fetishistic approach to the female body. Her works invite viewers to access an uncomfortable psychological space and to create significance from disparate objects joined together.

A first glance at *Je suis une image* (I am an image, 2014) suggests a titillating experience of a woman provocatively pulling down her pale pink underwear behind a curtain of synthetic platinum-blond hair. The body appears hidden but intact. Moving around the sculpture, however, leads to the realization that the “body” consists only of a leg and an arm. The rest of the tableau must be conjured by the imagination. The elbow is propped on the knee (all cast from gypsum), and the leg and swath of hair are attached to a component of a prefabricated hanging system mounted to the wall. The finger looks as though it is in the midst of removing the underwear as an act of seduction, but the hair suggests artifice, while the metal structure connotes a store display. Like much of Blass’s work, *Je suis une image* encourages viewers to project their own interpretations onto an ambiguous and incomplete narrative, even as they question the structural integrity of the object.

JG



Je suis une image, 2014; Forton, modified hanging system, underwear, synthetic hair extensions; 50 × 18 × 28 in.
(127 × 46 × 71 cm)

THE BODY IN PIECES