

# ARTFORUM

## Gina Beavers

By Courtney Fiske  
September 26, 2014



Gina Beavers, *Who Has Braces*, 2014, acrylic and wood on canvas, artist frame, 30 x 30"

On December 1, 1961, Claes Oldenburg's Store opened on Manhattan's East Second Street. For sale were replicas of banal objects—a plate of meat, a fur coat—made lumpy and lascivious. Each came as a burlesque of the commodity it represented, an enactment of its status as a fetish: lurid, slutty, and psychotic. Gina Beavers's latest paintings (all works 2014) preserve Oldenburg's morbid obscenity, taking up the genre of the still life in its French inflection as *nature morte*. Derived from images posted on social-media platforms, their subjects—a "smokey eye" tutorial, junky nail art, a smile girded by braces—conflate the animate and the inanimate, figuring flesh as something lifeless and flaccid.

Depicted straight on and close-up, several are serially composed, reflecting the use of online "collage apps" that mime the structure of desktop display. As in Oldenburg's Store objects, questions of morphology are at stake here. Small in scale, Beavers's canvases consist of sedimented layers of palette-knifed acrylic built up with modeling paste. Less pictorial than topographic, each positions paint's materiality as a metonym for that of the body's, making the latter seem cadaverous by comparison.

*Crotch Shots* from the Getty Villa, a five-part display of depictions of Greco-Roman genitalia snapped from statuary at the titular museum, is the show's highlight. Riffing on the age-old equation of paintbrush and phallus, the work collapses the logic of the polyptych, a favored format for Renaissance devotional imagery, onto that of the lewd selfie. Color is vivid and at moments tenuously mimetic: in the lower right, a spectrum of moist mauves; in the upper center, a gluey gray, like day-old oatmeal. The resulting forms are equal parts comic and repulsive, factual and abstract. In Beavers's hand, a sculptural afterthought becomes swollen and larval, recalling to us the strangeness of our enclosure by sweat glands and skin.