

BROOKLYN RAIL



Installation view: *Gina Beavers: Divine Consumer*, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, 2024. © Gina Beavers. Courtesy Marianne Boesky Gallery. Photo: Frankie Tyska

GINA BEAVERS: *DIVINE CONSUMER*

BY JESSICA HOLMES

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In earlier bodies of work, artist Gina Beavers has probed the excesses of late-stage capitalism—especially those that expose the often uneasy relationships we have with our bodies—with a wry, gimlet-eyed humor. Succulent lips, sourced from online makeup tutorials, become macabre valentines, while the fingernails of an over-styled manicure resemble the viscous human heart their hand clutches. Food, a perennial symbol of dissolution, has been a frequent motif in her work. Beavers’s 2020 wall relief, *Vagina Burger*, in which a loaded, meaty hamburger bursts forth from between vaginal lips, for instance, may have you snorting with laughter even as you squirm at its insouciant vulgarity.

Divine Consumer, now on view at Marianne Boesky, represents a surprising visual departure from Beavers’s earthier subject matter even as she keeps her sharp and amused eye trained on our culture of intemperance. This body of work, which Beavers has dubbed the *Comfortcore Paintings*, trades labial folds for those of a more textile variety, the resulting wall reliefs a trompe-l’oeil feat that manages to be both cozy and disquieting. Beavers derived most of her source material from the internet, though instead of trolling social media sites like Instagram or TikTok as she has done in the past, she’s combed retail marketplaces like Amazon for images of plush linens—towels, blankets, pillows, and the like—and transformed them into sumptuous, painted wall reliefs that approximate real home goods so closely that those with synesthetic urges will long to pull them from the wall and ensconce themselves.”

Chunky knit throw in Port (2024) is representative. Deceptively straightforward, the wood panel hanging from the wall looks, at first glance, as if it’s been wrapped in a wooly, wine-colored, woven blanket. The surface simplicity belies the labor-intensive process Beavers used to arrive at the finished piece. She molds and sculpts chunks of foam that she then affixes to the panel. Over this construction, the artist meticulously applies a fabric pattern in thick skeins of paint that trick the eye into believing the work is made from cloth. The reliefs coalesce around Beavers’s skill, which also

calls to mind the generations of artists of the past—weavers, knitters, quilters, and embroiderers—who have shaped fabric into art, creators who were overwhelmingly unnamed women, doing “women’s work.”

A relief like *Blue gingham ottoman stack* (2024) may recall your grandmother’s house, conjuring, as it does, freshly pressed and ironed table linens and furniture upholstered in the retro, blue-checked fabric. The work plugs into our strange, present moment where “tradwife” culture proliferates on the internet, making celebrities of women who performatively embrace a lifestyle adhering to traditional gender roles in a household—cooking, sewing, child-rearing, and the like—while cheerfully submitting to a male spouse’s authority. *American Soft towel set in Ruby* (2024), meanwhile, features a pillar of neatly folded towels, stacked to display their luxurious advantages to a consumer who might be eyeing them online. The work is reminiscent of the kind of image that may “follow” an internet user after seeing it on Amazon or Wayfair, popping up disconcertingly in future searches or embedded in a news feed scroll after viewing the listing once: a digital, trailing spy employed in a consumerist surveillance designed to wear down those who are only browsing online and convert them into buyers.



Gina Beavers, *Blue gingham ottoman stack*, 2024. Oil, acrylic, putty, paper pulp, foam, and wood stain on panel, 72 x 62 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches. © Gina Beavers. Courtesy Marianne Boesky Gallery.

That these works will likely cause the viewer to simultaneously chuckle and shiver with unease is a testament to the layers they contain despite their outwardly straightforward subject matter. Perhaps this is nowhere clearer than in *Knit weighted blanket landscape* (2024), one of the largest works on view and a centerpiece of the exhibition. Once again, the surface is ostensibly homey; from across the gallery it appears as if two oversized blankets in varying shades of burgundy had been dropped side by side in a snuggly pile. As the viewer draws closer, the “weave” of Beavers’s paint crystallizes, and the multitude of tones she has used to make the work become clear. A twinge of discontent begins to set in, as the weave morphs in the mind’s eye into something more sinister: spilled innards of roadkill, perhaps—or hamburger meat. The surface luxuries of our capitalist age often draw a veil over its more disturbing inner workings, their comforts lulling us into a false sense of security even as we capitulate to the dictates of surveillance, consumption, or patriarchy. The *Comfortcore Paintings* are a potent reminder that we ignore these precepts at our own peril.