



Ivana Bašić
Temptation of Being
 21 February – 17 April 2025

Albion Jeune is pleased to present *Temptation of Being*, New York-based artist Ivana Bašić's (b. 1986, Belgrade) first solo exhibition with the gallery. Exhibition comprises a series of drawings and intimate, sculptural works that test the bounds of human materiality. Sculptures in wax, white bronze, blown glass, copper and stainless steel reveal biomechanical curves and alabaster cores resembling abstract and abject reductions of the body.

Shaped by the artist's early experiences of violence and brutality during the collapse of her native Yugoslavia, Bašić's hybrid bodies contemplate metamorphosis as a substitute for physical flight when there is nowhere left to retreat or hide.

The artist references Catherine Malabou's "Ontology of the Accident", which posits the transformation into Otherness as the only choice available when physical flight has become impossible.¹ Probing the limitations of organic plasticity, the abstracted bodily forms are imbued with potential, evoking gestures of opening up and blossoming, while the reality of what they are fleeing – war, technological advances, political instability – lingers darkly in the background.

At the heart of the exhibition lies the *Ungrounding* series, a collection of watercolour drawings on paper that serve as the conceptual and visual focal point. The elliptical forms, dissolved pigments, and warping of paper, invoke a womb-like environment, cyclical images of nebulae, cellular life, becoming and unbecoming "dust to dust." For Bašić, this sort of quantum return is an optimistic, generative space—a reacquaintance with the most basal and indivisible ingredients of existence.

The *Ungrounding* series acts as a blueprint for the formation of the body and the being and its ethereal origins, explored through the sculptural works in the show.

Abstracted sculptures distill the body to its most essential traces, hovering between embodiment and dissolution. On opposite walls, two forms resemble insect chrysalises with armour-like bronze shells, as well as otherworldly wombs caught in the process of opening, blossoming, and birthing. The beams surrounding the sculptures are safety instruments known as "Grounding rods"—devices that are used as pathways for magnetic and electrical forces to safely connect to Earth. The circular organization of these rods simultaneously evokes the gesture of pinning a butterfly and mimics the rays of passion and transformation in mystical depictions of the Sacred Heart.

Hypostasis, a floor-based sculpture, explores life's ephemeral nature, encapsulated in translucent glass eggs filled with dust and the artist's breath. These forms, hermetically sealed and awaiting to be hatched, embody the brutality and potential of life forces. In Bašić's *Fantasy vanishes in flesh* (2025), ornate steel frames, crowned with a radiant halo signify an almost alchemical union of the telluric and celestial, sacred and profane, matter and spirit. The work's ethereal aspirations, manifested in its meticulous metalwork and symmetrical design, find their earthly counterpoint in the organic tendrils that descend like silver roots or spectral limbs, while their central wax painting appears to capture a spirit suspended in the liminal space between corporeal and divine states. *Breath seeps through her tightly closed mouth | Position II: Swelling #2* contemplates flights from materiality into other forms of existence. This sculpture contains a single blown glass entity suspended on a steel armature—pure, transcendental "breath" in commune with the entropic pressures of life and death.

Bašić's practice employs a visual language in which each material symbolically links to a conceptual counterpart. This codex is consistent across the artist's practice, allowing the viewer to understand each artwork in the context of Bašić's greater theoretical cosmology. Wax represents temporal elements such as flesh and organic tissue; its origins in petroleum gesture toward the cyclicity of life and decay. Glass, meanwhile, represents the breath that formed it, and stainless steel the forces of life and death that act on the body. Stone is the consolidation of organic life and matter that, under pressure, is further atomized into dust. In her consideration of dust Bašić references philosopher Reza Negarestani: "Dust is irreducible. The

elemental object of creation—a formula for life without life itself."²These materials, along with intangible forces like pressure, breath, weight, and torque, combine to create a body of work that investigates our most pressing ontological fixations: the fragility of the human condition; the breakdown of self and the Other; the reimagination of life and death; and the quest for immortality.

¹ Catherine Malabou posits a form of 'destructive plasticity' where an individual can emerge profoundly altered from experiences of trauma, becoming 'The Wholly Other'—a new identity that cannot reconcile with its former self. Catherine Malabou, *The Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, trans. Carolyn Shread (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).

² See Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (Melbourne: re.press, 2008).

Ivana Bašić (b. 1986, Belgrade) addresses the vulnerability and transformation of the body and human matter in her work. By using different materials in the work (such as wax, glass, steel, alabaster, oil paint) and combining these with technique and immaterial matters (such as breath, pressure and rigidity), the sculptures acquire a posthuman quality. The colours she chooses refer strongly to the human body. Pink, white and natural combinations are reminiscent of blood, bone and flesh.

Bašić received her bachelor's degree from Belgrade University and her master's degree from the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU. Recent solo exhibitions of the artist's work have taken place at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade (2025); Novembar Gallery, Belgrade (2018); Marlborough Contemporary, New York (2017); and Annka Kultys Gallery, London (2016). The artist participated in group exhibitions held at Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2023); Lafayette Anticipations, Paris (2023); Francesca Minini Gallery, Milan (2022); Anonymous Gallery, New York (2022); Someday Gallery, New York (2022); Galerie du Monde, Hong Kong (2022); National Gallery Prague (2021); Museum of Art and Design at Miami Dade College (2020); Lyles & King, New York (2020); Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2020); Athens Biennial (2018); Belgrade Biennial (2018); and Hessel Museum of Art, Annendale- On Hudson (2017), among others. Her work is in the permanent collection of The Whitney Museum, New York. The artist lives and works in New York.

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