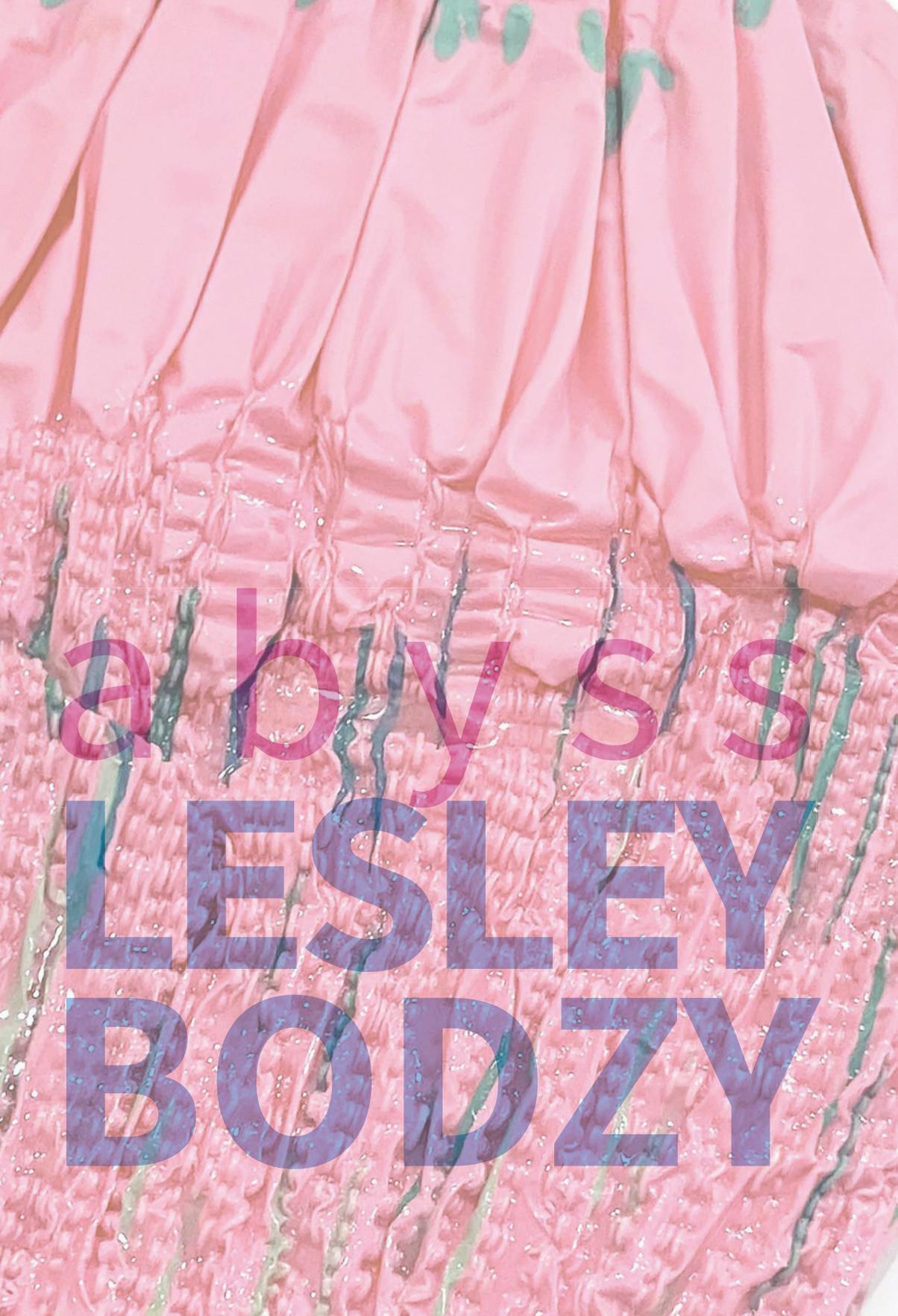


abyss
LESLEY
BODZY







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Latex, resin, 22 x 23 x 10 inches

Inner: Halcyon vertigo, 2024, detail. Latex, resin, acrylic pigments
48 x 27 x 3 inches © Lesley Bodzy

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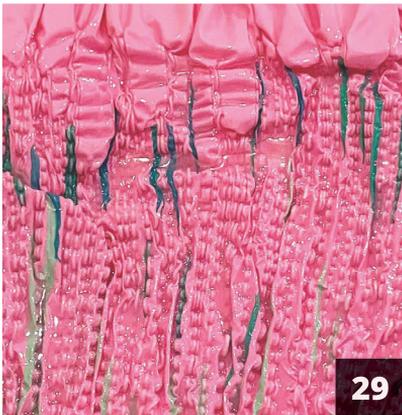


contents



Abyss

Lesley Bodzy's new body of work summons fantastical deep-sea creatures from the depths of our existential abyss.



Lesley Bodzy in conversation with Anna Mikaela Ekstrand

The artist explores key themes of her most recent body of work with curator Anna Mikaela Ekstrand



abyss

In the inky expanse where light dares not tread, there lies a kingdom, deep and uncharted. A world where shadow and silence convene beneath the waves, creatures unfathomable swim. With eyes like lanterns that gleam in the night, they flow in the currents of cold, endless streams of thoughts and hopes, fears and dreams. They are born of the dark, by nature's own hand, imperfect and flawed. Some are like whispers, with tendrils that twirl, others like ghosts caught in an eternal swirl, some glow with a light that's soft, otherworldly; a spark that flickers in the great abyss's cold world.

Lesley Bodzy's new body of work summons fantastical deep-sea creatures from the depths of our existential abyss. In ancient Greek philosophy, the concept of the abyss was often linked to the primordial chaos from which the cosmos emerged. A formless, infinite and dark expanse, representing both the origin and the potential for all existence. Kierkegaard spoke of the 'leap of faith' required to confront the abyss of uncertainty and despair inherent in human existence. Nietzsche famously warned that 'if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you,' suggesting a confrontation with the void could lead to a profound transformation. The abyss, in this sense, represents the end-

less play of signification and the inherent instability of language and identity from which the enigmatic and yet thoroughly beautiful creatures crafted by Bodzy emerge.

Conflating influences from the early biomorphic explorations of surrealism with the material experiments of 1960s and 70s late modern pioneers like Lynda Benglis, Marisa Merz, and Heidi Bucher, among others, Bodzy explores the creative potential of a visceral material sensuality that engages both the viewer's tactile imagination and physical presence. In Bodzy's work, surface, texture, and form are not merely visual elements but experiences that engage the viewer's sense of touch, bodily presence, and emotional response. Her manipulation of materials generates ambiguous and evocative objects that provoke, seduce, and challenge the viewer, highlighting the layered, complex nature of physical and emotional intimacy.

Just as the ocean's depths are vast and largely uncharted, so too are the recesses of the human psyche. The mysterious and sometimes grotesque forms of Bodzy's deep-sea creatures evoke a sense of sublimity, confronting us with the limits of our understanding and control while inviting us to search for meaning and growth through personal evolution.







Lesley Bodzy

Astral reminiscence, 2025

Latex, resin

22 x 23 x 10 inches,

photo: Steven Probert

© Lesley Bodzy





Lesley Bodzy

Fleeting effulgence, 2025

Latex, metallic pigments,

polyurethane foam

30 x 20 x 14,

photo: Steven Probert

© Lesley Bodzy



Lesley Bodzy

Diaphanous nebula, (detail) 2024

Latex, resin

108 x 84 x 72 inches

© Lesley Bodzy





Lesley Bodzy

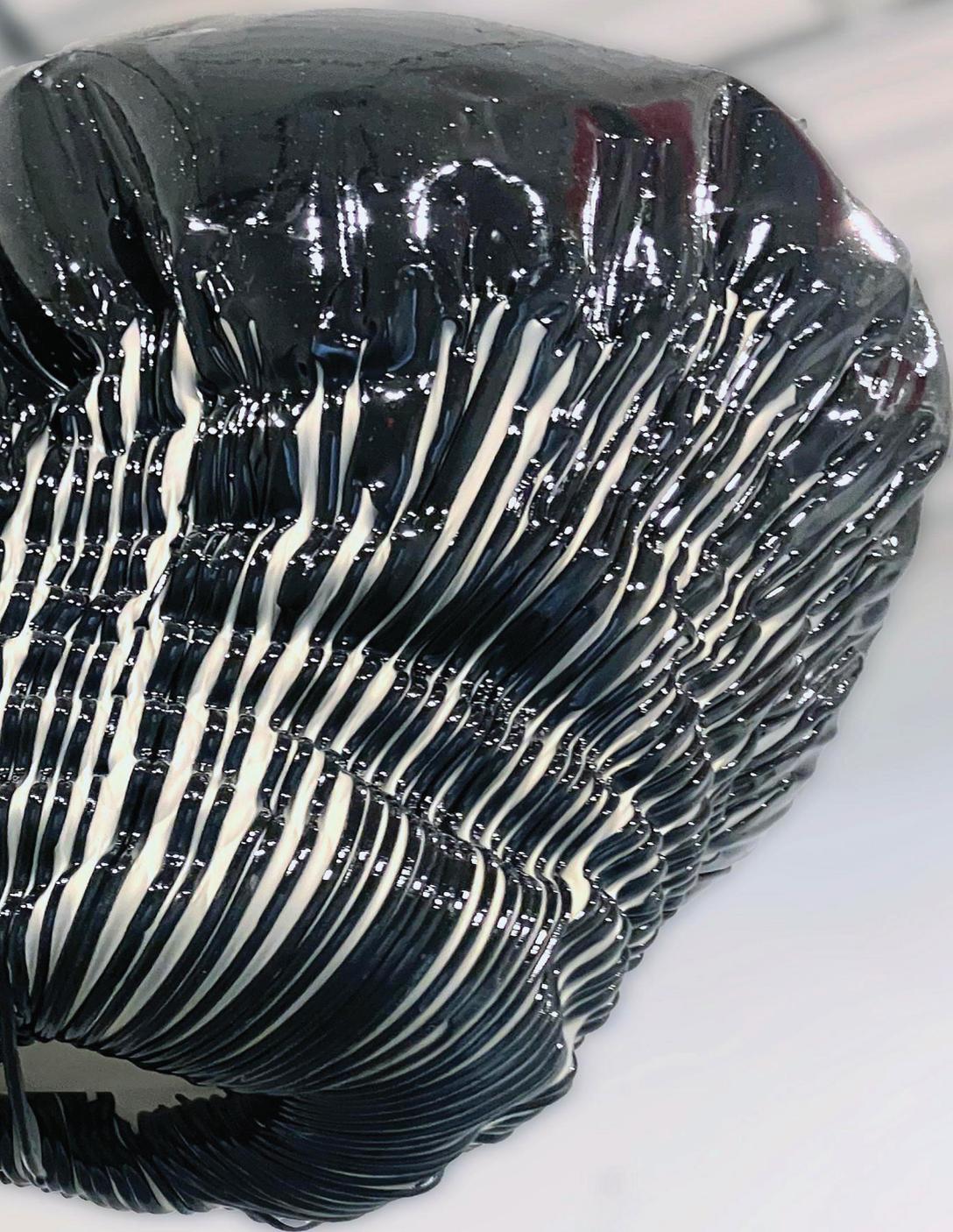
Diaphanous nebula, 2024

Latex, resin

108 x 84 x 72 inches

© Lesley Bodzy







Lesley Bodzy

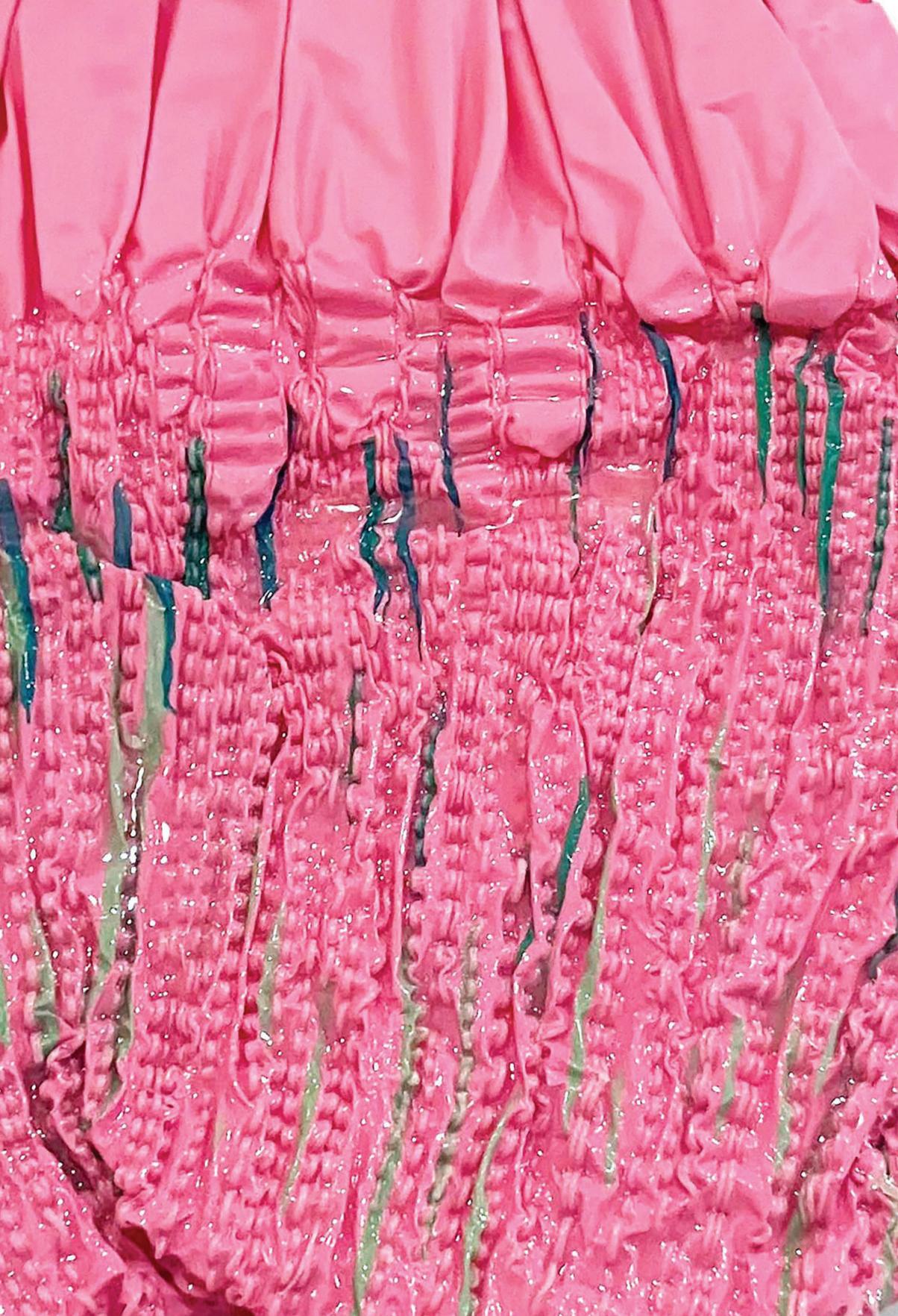
Halcyon vertigo, 2024

Latex, resin, acrylic pigments

48 x 27 x 3 inches,

photo: Steven Probert

© Lesley Bodzy



Lesley Bodzy

Imperturbable eunoia,

2024

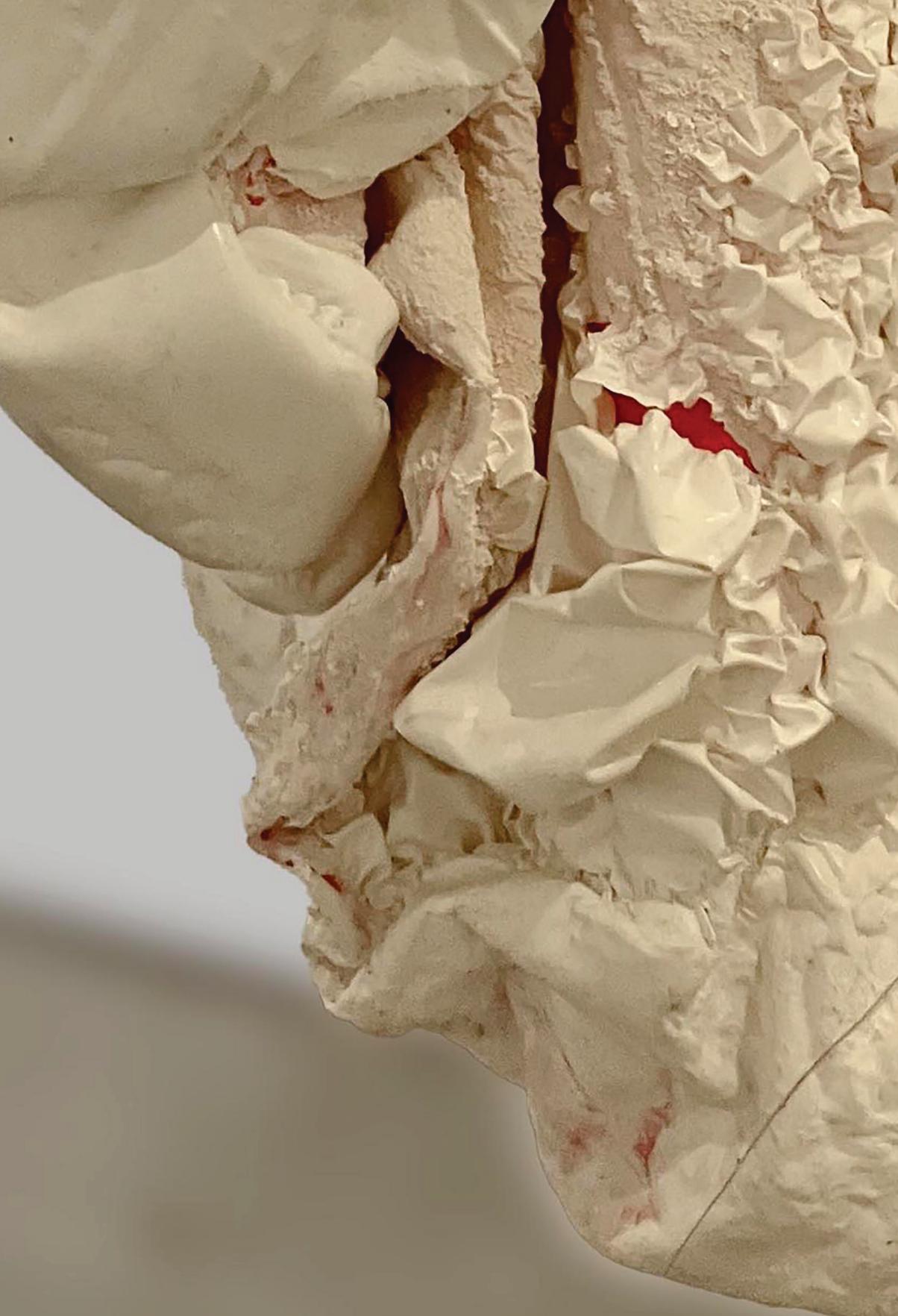
Latex, acrylic pigments

26 x 15 x 12 inches,

photo: Steven Probert

© Lesley Bodzy





Lesley Bodzy

Perpetual murmur, 2024

Latex,
polyurethane foam
36 x 36 x 36 inches

© Lesley Bodzy









Lesley Bodzy

FOGO XIV, 2024

Latex, resin

22 x 24 x 10 inches

© Lesley Bodzy



Lesley Bodzy

FOGO IX, 2024

Latex, resin

22 x 24 x 10 inches

© Lesley Bodzy





Lesley Bodzy

Installation view: *Levity and Depth*

Curated by Michael David, March 7-29, 2025 M. David and Co. at Art Cake
214 40th Street, Sunset Park, Brooklyn,

© Lesley Bodzy



interview

Levity and Depth lay within the intersection of beauty, youth, time, and identity. Beauty as concealment has been present in your previous work, such as your paint pour gold drapes, as well as youth, in your cast bronze Relic-series. These new works part of the Abyss series might be the first time all these topics converge. How did you end up here in your making?

Certainly, you are right. Time is new. Beauty is an under-current in all my work, and life—and something, I flip-flop on talking about in art contexts. For instance, I recently began a new series. I made all these objects which are now in the studio that appear so ugly to me. I have to walk away from them now. After I finish a work I ask, ‘is this aesthetically pleasing to me?’ Aesthetics are important to me. This leads back to my identity, which is something of a construct. There is the real interior person and there is the exterior construct that I have been creating for many years. That is what Jackie Kennedy did: she created a construct. I studied her style. It’s not that easy to keep looking good. Creating a personal style—the exterior is an interior journey. Jackie paid attention to detail, creating an image for the American people.

She was truly an icon. Extreme and prescribed ideas of femininity are loudly back in style with the current trad-wife and soft-life frenzy on social media. Rather than the ‘artifice’ which is a parallel, a second skin, as it were, these women seek a singular existence to serve their

husbands or families, sometimes ironically, or for show, and sometimes in truth.

I don't think it is very self-realized. Why are women buying back into this? It is difficult to maintain a beautiful home, family, job, and self all at once—expectations on young women are high. Perhaps women are tired of working? But this idea that women are there to serve others saddens me—the *Relics* series, breasts on meat hooks, critiques how women's bodies are objectified. I have had a strong sense of identity since my twenties and came to make my mark in male-dominated spheres. I have been affected by the pressures of being a woman, but I have not backed down; my golden paint skins explore this darker side of womanhood, a nagging need to hide behind a beautiful facade, or be hidden there. But let's not forget that there is also joy in beauty. My recent article in *Flaunt* portrayed me as I am: I am interested in fashion, and aesthetics and how they interplay with art.

Both your *Relics* and the paint pours have a more a darker side to them, one which I do also see in your current series. How did the idea for this new project come about?

You mentioned time earlier. That is the element that is new in the *Levity* and *Depth* series—I found myself looking into the abyss, it's scary. People around me are passing away. I feel acutely that I have only have a finite amount of time left.

Your new works seem to inhabit the space between beauty and the grotesque. What draws you to these liminal forms, and how do you see them reflecting the instability of identity in today's world?

Yes, I'm very interested in that threshold where beauty begins to fray, and the grotesque starts to feel oddly se-

ductive. Liminal forms allow for ambiguity, contradiction, and emotional complexity, which I see as essential to how we experience identity today. We're constantly shifting between roles, personas, expectations. Nothing feels fixed anymore: gender, truth, not even our sense of self. By working in that in-between space, I can make sculptures that feel unstable or unsettled, and that tension becomes a metaphor for what it means to be human. I'm drawn to materials and forms that echo that fragility, something that might seem exquisite from a distance but up-close reveals fractures, distortions, decay. I think that's how many of us experience ourselves: as layered, imperfect, and in constant flux.

I think of the French-American author Anaïs Nin, whose daring work, often about sex from a female perspective, was about personal transformation buoyed by time, maturing, and courage. She wrote: "And the time came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."

Indeed. I have always been very conscious of time; time management, setting timelines, being on time, defying time. Now, being in the later part of my life, I need to use my time wisely. That quote by Nin is beautiful.

The concept of the abyss—as chaos, potential, and transformation—features prominently in both existentialist thought and your work. How do you reconcile the tension between the abyss as a source of dread and as a well-spring of creation?

The abyss is central to my practice, it's that place where certainty collapses, where meaning unravels. In existentialist thought, it often represents dread, the confrontation with nothingness. But I also see it as a kind of generative void: a place where the old breaks down to make

space for something new, something raw and unformed.

That tension between fear and possibility is what animates my work. I don't try to resolve it; I hold both states at once. In the studio, that might look like allowing the material to behave unpredictably, to resist control. There's a surrender involved, a willingness to step into the unknown and let the work emerge from that encounter with the materials.

I think we live in a time when people are constantly at the edge of the abyss—socially, ecologically, psychologically. My sculptures are a way of giving form to that space: where you're falling but also becoming.

Despite the existentialist undertone and sophisticated aesthetics, I also detect a sense of playfulness in your new work.

It's nice that you see that! Playfulness is very important in my practice. Oftentimes, the subject matter of a new project emerges while I spend time in the studio experimenting with the material. Each material then leads to another. Subconsciously, I might have been thinking about time and death, but in the early part of exploring this series I was experimenting with latex and paint. I was strongly inspired by the work of Eva Hesse; one of the first artists who worked with latex. Hers was industrial grade, and there is speculation that the toxicity of the materials she worked with led her to develop the brain tumor that killed her. Of course, it is difficult to think about Hesse without thinking about death, because she died young. I was more interested in the inflated round balloons that she covered with twine and then deflated. I covered them with different materials, glue and resin, for instance, I embellished some with paint and let them dry. Then I popped them, or allowed them to deflate nat-



Lesley Bodzy

Unsteady contingency, 2024

Latex, resin

58 x 20 x 12 inches

© Lesley Bodzy



Lesley Bodzy

Aqueous inheritance,

2024

Latex, resin

76 x 16 x 16 inches

© Lesley Bodzy

urally. I was playing around with the idea of how to keep them permanently inflated. Maybe making them in glass, which would allow them to preserve their shape. Then I realized that like the balloons, women cannot keep their bodies firm forever. All women face deflation. The deflation of the balloons and the unexpected behavior of the foam got me thinking. I let the material move in on things, in a bodily manner. Heidi Bucher also worked with latex, she made imprints of houses and objects that were meaningful. There was a very high level of artifice in Bucher and Hesse's work as well.

Is there a tension between exploration or pushing the boundary of a material and its expression? Do you have a goal in mind when you work with different materials; or rather, when do you dictate, and when are you guided by your materials?

With the paint pours, I experimented with the material for months. It took me a long time to figure out how to mix the paint to achieve a material that I could sculpt. That is not at all the case with my latest series where I inflate the balloon and then drip resin or glue on it. I am not sure what will happen, it's all up to chance. It's about putting your trust in the process and knowing when to stop. For example, I use liquid foam which does quirky and unpredictable things, it might whip out unexpectedly like a tail or a genital organ. When I realized that the work was centered around time, I started exploring photos of deep-sea creatures like the sea slugs—I just love their colors and quirky tendril-like limbs. They have a timeless quality, having existed for over 500 million years: an eternity. Also, they are aesthetically pleasing with their vibrant colors.

35 Your creatures seem to emerge from an inner, psychological ocean. How do dreams, unconscious impulses, or personal mythology inform your creative process?

Yes, I often think of my sculptures as surfacing from some deep internal sea: part memory, part instinct, part dream residue. I don't begin with a clear image or concept. Instead, I let unconscious impulses guide me directly with the material. There's a kind of trance-like listening involved. I'm not trying to illustrate a specific narrative, but rather to channel a presence that feels emotionally true, even if it's not logically explained.

Dreams and personal mythology are part of that vocabulary. They give shape to the things we can't always name our fears, our desires, our private rituals. I think the creatures carry that weight: they're composite beings, stitched together from fragments of lived experience and imagined next worlds.

The forms may be unfamiliar, but I hope they tap into something archetypal something that makes the viewer feel like they've met this creature before, maybe in a dream they don't quite remember or in a future they can't yet name.

Nietzsche's idea that "the abyss gazes back" suggests art can be a mirror to our darkest questions. Do you see your work as a space where viewers are meant to confront something unresolved within themselves?

Yes, I do think of my work as a kind of psychic mirror, one that doesn't offer answers but instead holds space for uncertainty, discomfort, even confrontation. Nietzsche's idea that "the abyss gazes back" resonates deeply with me. When you really face something raw or unknowable, whether in yourself or in art, it doesn't just reflect; it implicates you. It asks you to stay with what's unresolved. I'm not trying to shock or disturb, but I do want to dislodge. The forms I make often evoke both attraction and unease, and I think that tension opens a door inward. Viewers might project their own fears, longings, or memories onto the work, not because I've encoded specific

meanings, but because the ambiguity allows room for that kind of engagement. In that sense, the sculptures become thresholds, not just to the unconscious, but to a kind of emotional honesty. They don't resolve anything, but they invite the viewer to be present with whatever rises in response.

There is a sense of sublime confrontation in your pieces, an invitation to face what is unknowable or unnameable. What role does mystery play in your art, and do you believe that the unknowable is essential to aesthetic experience?

Mystery is essential to my work. It's not something I add in; it's something I protect. I try not to over define the forms or overdetermine their meaning, because I believe the power of art lies in what it withholds as much as in what it reveals. The unknowable isn't a flaw in understanding; it's the space where meaning can take root in a more intimate, personal way. I think true aesthetic experience happens when we're slightly off balance, when we encounter something that resists easy language. That's where the sublime lives, not just in grandeur or beauty, but in that shiver of recognition when you meet something strange and feel, somehow, that it's speaking to you. So yes, the mystery is intentional. It's an invitation, not to solve, but to feel. To stay with the question. Because in a world that constantly demands clarity and certainty, I want my work to offer something else: a place where ambiguity is allowed to breathe, and where transformation can begin.

Lesley Bodzy

Imprudent entwinement, 2024

Latex, resin, hair extensions

8 x 3 x3 inches

© Lesley Bodzy





Lesley Bodzy
FOGO XV, 2024
Latex, glue
29 x 14 x 8 inches
© Lesley Bodzy



Lesley Bodzy
FOGO XIII, 2024
Latex, glue
30 x 9 x 8 inches
© Lesley Bodzy





Lesley Bodzy

Left: *Levity and Depth* at M. David and Co.

Above: *Translucent fragility*, 2024

Latex, polyurethane foam,
resin, acrylic paint

36 x 36 x 40 inches © Lesley Bodzy



Lesley Bodzy

Indelible sagacity, 2025

Latex, resin, acrylic
pigments

35 x 35 x 16 inches

© Lesley Bodzy





Lesley Bodzy

Unavoidable caraphernelia, 2024

Latex, resin, chain

40 x 15 x 15 inches

© Lesley Bodzy



Lesley Bodzy

Foreseeable obelus, 2024

Latex, concrete, resin

10 x 8 x 4 inches

© Lesley Bodzy

Lesley Bodzy

Ineffable afterimage, 2024

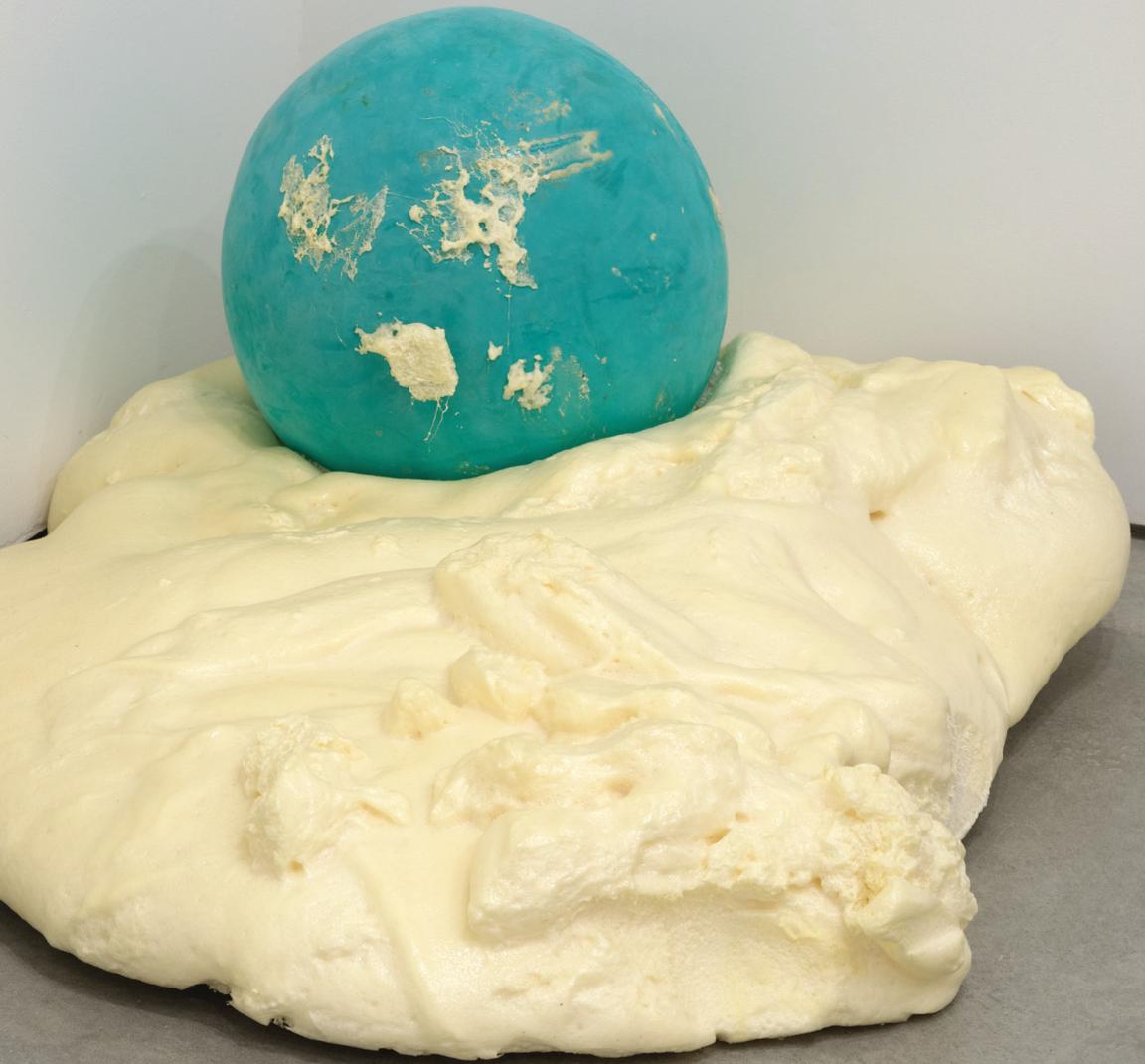
Latex, polyurethane foam

16 x 30 x 35 inches,

photo: Steven Probert

© Lesley Bodzy









Lesley Bodzy

Studio, works in progress, 2024

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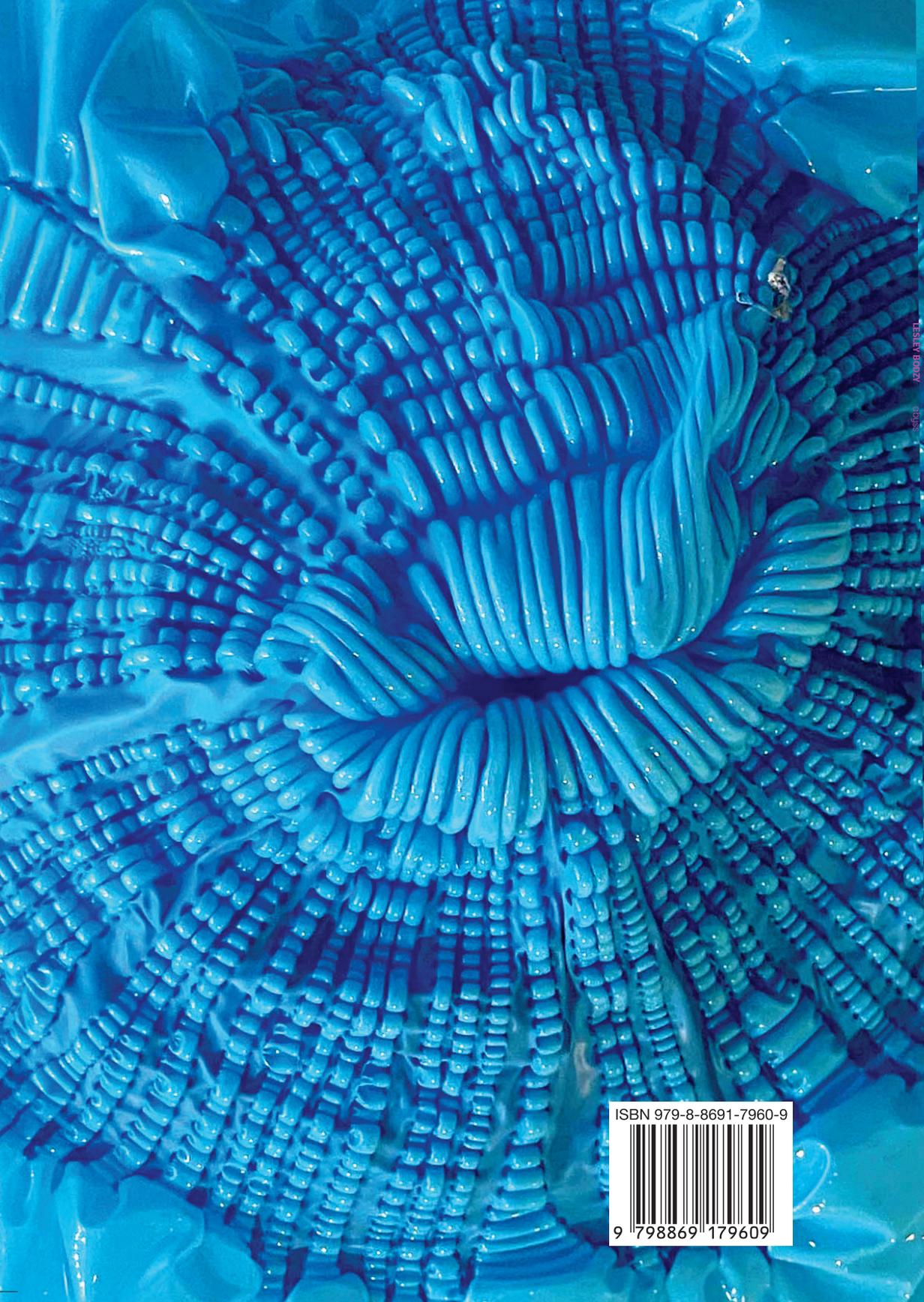












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