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Our Critics' Picks of the Moment? Chair Sculptures, Skyscraping Abstractions, and an Ode to an Artist Gone Too Soon

Ksenia M. Soboleva's debut for the Critics' Table is a reflection on Gordon Hall's new work at the Kitchen, Johanna Fateman gives a quintessentially New York painter a solid rave, and John Vincler is delighted by a two-part show honoring Jenni Crain.

May 21, 2025



Performance view: Gordon Hall: *Hands and Knees*, The Kitchen, New York, 2025. Courtesy the artist and the Kitchen. Photo: Jackie Furtado.

Gordon Hall
The Kitchen at Westbeth | 163B Bank Street, 4th Floor
Through May 31

Have you ever noticed that a pair of chairs facing away from each other evoke a body on all fours? In Gordon Hall's new exhibition, "Hands and Knees" at the Kitchen, five such configurations form the core cast of actors. For these simply composed sculptures in vibrant colors—bright red, dark purple, light blue—the artist has removed the seats and backs of chrome cantilevered chairs, negating their customary utility as furniture and opening them to non-normative purposes. Distributed throughout the sun-flooded loft space, the works suggest submission, whether in pleasure, pain, or prayer—states that are by no means mutually exclusive.

Coming to visual art with a dance background, Hall investigates how objects invite bodily interaction, recalling the work of postmodern choreographer Simone Forti, who has explored movement in relation to sculptural constructions or props. There is also a palpable affinity between the sleek, minimal aesthetic of Hall's work and that of Roni Horn's paired sculptures, which, with their *almost* identical components, prompt an awareness of difference across objects and bodies.

Unannounced performances during gallery hours on scheduled days introduce human bodies into Hall's arrangements. Suspended in a state of waiting during my visit to the show, I witness how two muscular people carry performers in on stretcher-like sculptures, which they place horizontally on the chair forms, literally topping them, allowing them to serve as supports after all. These "recliners," as the artist calls the performers, who are each approximately Hall's height (a casting requirement), rest on their sides, backs, or bellies. (Some poses are clearly more comfortable than others). I find myself contemplating how my body might occupy these sculptures—folded over, stretched across them. How do we create places of repose in a society that fetishizes productivity, where seating increasingly disappears from public space, rendering it hostile to those the government deems undesirable?

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