

ARTFORUM



Lionel Maunz, *In the Sewer of Your Body (detail)*, 2018, cast iron, steel, glass, 82 x 36 1/2 x 36 1/2".

NEW YORK
Lionel Maunz

BUREAU
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Lionel Maunz finds flesh to be malleable in the most torturous sense. It is rendered not in soft resins and pink plastics but black iron, closer to the torqued bronze of Rodin than the gleeful puttness found in MoMA PS1's 2017 exhibition "Past Skin." A condition report for one of the sculpted figures on display, *In the Sewer of Your Body* (all works 2018), the show's titular piece: Hand like a glove, flesh creased at the wrist; knobs of malignant tumors; facial tissue webbed; gaping wound above right breast. The creature—for it seems not quite human, haunches hugging sunken

chest—is encased in a glass cube, as if a specimen. This museological mode of display becomes more disturbing, literally operational, in the back gallery. Three conjoined steel slabs, positioned like surgical tables just below waist height, hold the decaying cadaver of a boy and a clunky apparatus identified as a "gynecological restraint." Nearby, *Cradle of Sperm* sits heavily on the floor like a dentist's chair, with curved armatures intended to constrain the viewer's body (calf braces, chest straps, head pillow, and groin prong with ovoid opening). The imagined patient might be [Francis Bacon's](#) Pope Innocent X.

Maunz claims to be working through views on sin, antinatalism, Calvinism, and the horrific architecture of Josef Fritzl's basement prison for his daughter, who was monstrously abused for twenty-four years. The result is a re-creation of the associated agonies. I am reminded of [Doreen Garner's](#) performance *Purge*, 2017, a "dissection" of Dr. J. Marion Sims in retribution for his forced gynecological experiments on enslaved black women in the nineteenth century. Indeed, if Maunz's sculpture of a dead man chained to a hull-like crypt doesn't conjure enough specters and shackles, his process must. The iron is, after all, *cast*, poured into a mold to conform to some form, a body whose negative shell is still out there, asking, *Whose ghosts are these?*

— [Mira Dayal](#)