

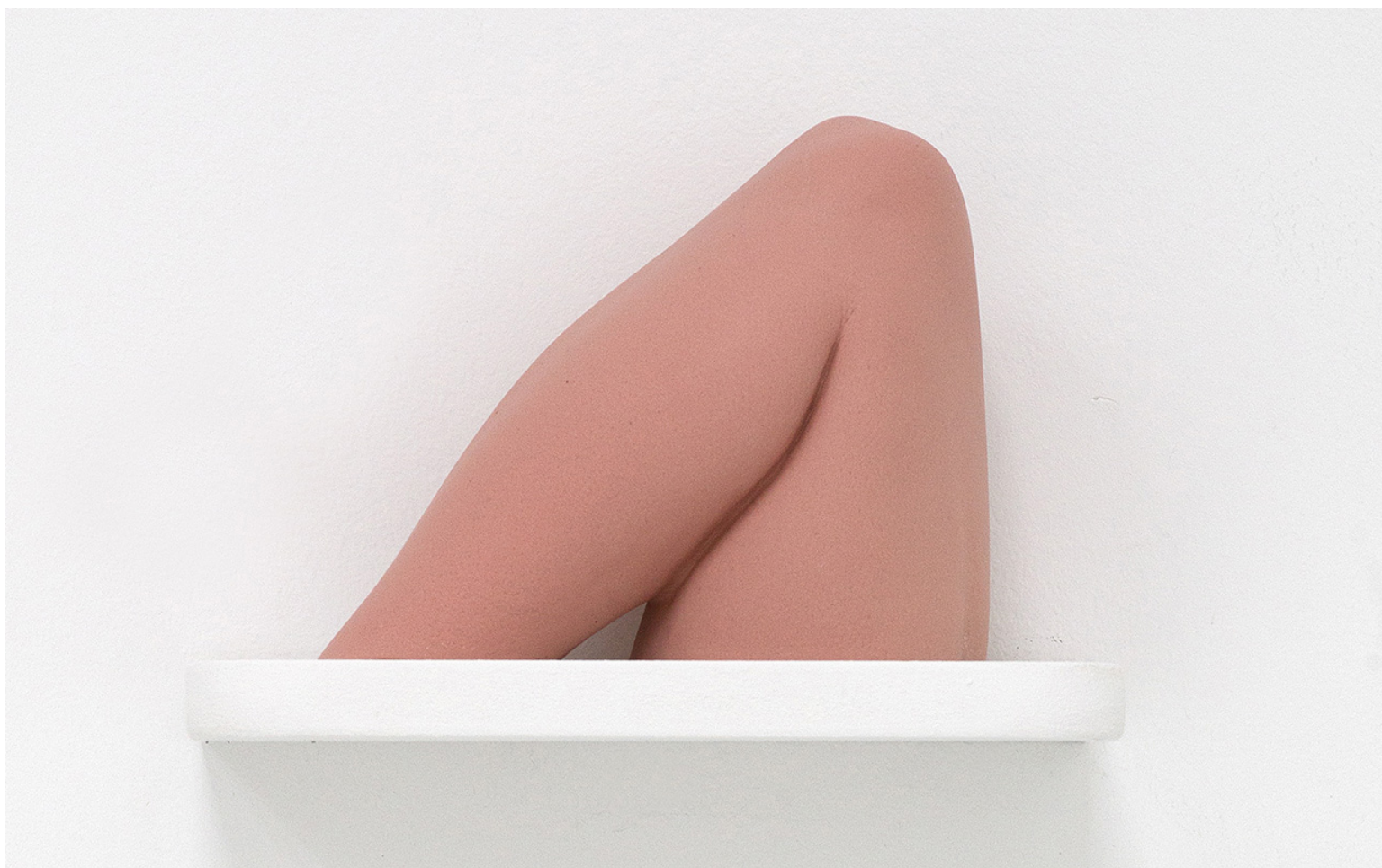
Art Reviews

A Walk in Frédérique Lucien's Winter Garden

A new exhibition combines the artist's uncanny bodily sculptures with her two-dimensional botanical works.



Richard Kalina 21 hours ago



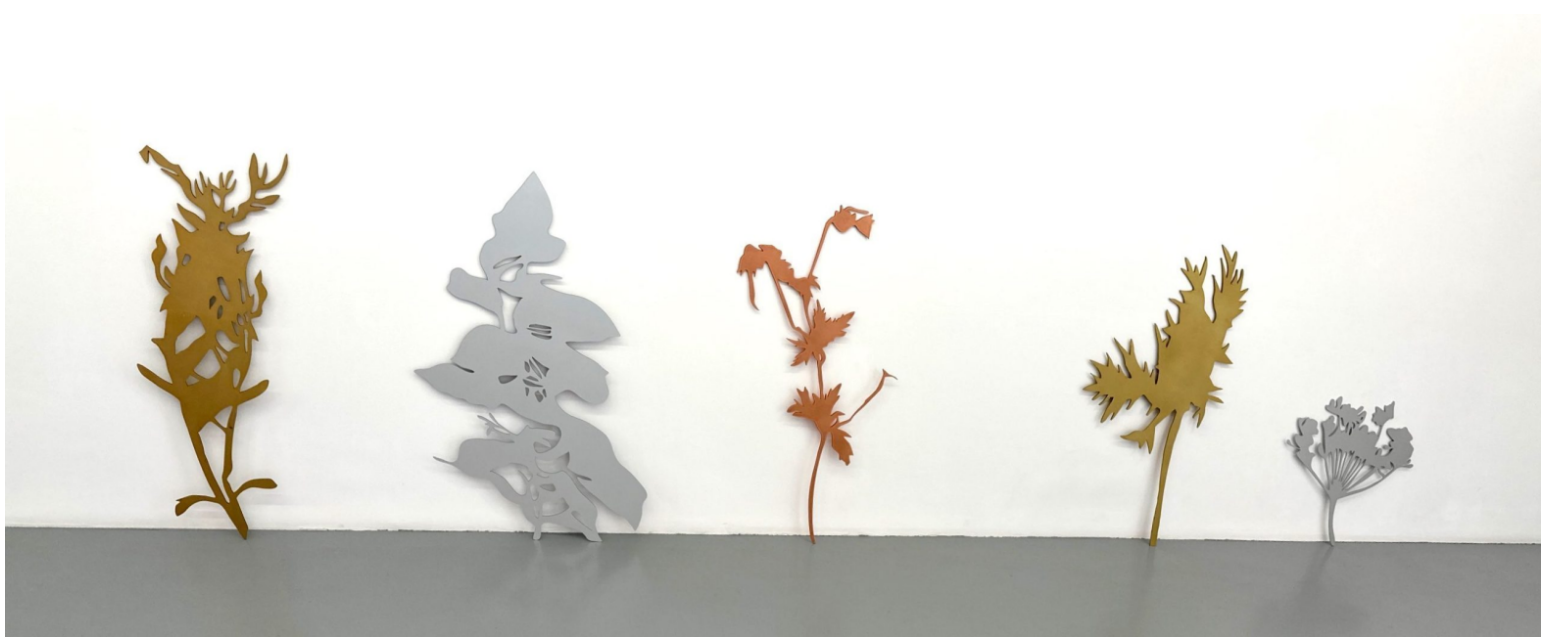
Frédérique Lucien, "Courbure" (2022), porcelain, 4 3/4 x 6 inches, (photo by A. Ricci, courtesy Galerie Jean Fournier)

PARIS — Frédérique Lucien's exhibition *Jardin d'hiver* at Galerie Jean Fournier speaks to her continuing engagement with both the sculptural representation of the body (most often her own) and the malleable forms of the botanical world. Lucien typically operates at the intersection of painting, drawing, and sculpture, and this installation offers examples of them all. A *jardin d'hiver* is a winter garden — an orangerie, greenhouse, or conservatory — a place that allows plants to grow out of season and out of their normal context. In this exhibition, Lucien draws the outlines of delicate, complicated natural forms — intertwined flowers, seed pods, stems, and leaves.

These forms are then cut out of sheets of aluminum, brass, or copper — their dimensionality is flattened and overlapping parts are merged. The use of metal transforms the abstracted immateriality of a drawing into something with a different sort of presence and physicality — a flat, rigid form that can be either attached to the wall individually or in groupings, set on the floor and leaned against it, or suspended in a line from a bar. The negative space of the cutout can also be used, the leftover metal rectangle framing an image of the plant form on a white wall. (The rectangle is often raised a bit off the wall so that a fine dark shadow line of the plant becomes another depictive element.) Pushing up against the delicacy of the cut metal works are big, brush collaged paintings of these same flat forms, scaled up and executed in black, white, and metallic paints, complemented by a series of small, flatly patterned, and vividly colored cut-out gouaches that use similar plant motifs.



Frédérique Lucien, "Leaves and Flowers" (2023), suite of 7 elements, brass, aluminum, copper, 10 x 39 inches (photo Richard Kalina/*Hyperallergic*)



Frédérique Lucien, "Leaves of Grass" (2022–2023), brass, aluminum, copper, 35 x 19 x 19/100 inches (photo Richard Kalina/*Hyperallergic*)

Lucien's body sculptures operate in counterpoint to her two-dimensional botanical work. As with the leaves and flowers, the body images are also removed from their normal context, both in terms of form and display. Lucien takes isolated elements of her body — an elbow, a knee, a foot, or lips — and casts them in porcelain, with either matte or lustrous surfaces in a range of colors, from natural flesh tones, to stark white, jet black, yellow, or gold. Another distancing strategy beyond truncation and color manipulation is scale. The porcelain firing process shrinks the forms, imbuing these objects with a doll-like uncanniness. That strangeness is heightened by their means of display, placed on small wall-mounted shelves as with “Courbure” (2022), attached directly to the wall, as with “Bocca” (2022), or laid out, meat-like, in a scaled-up wooden *garde-manger*; or food storage bin, as with “Cellier” (2022). Sometimes the body part is readily identifiable, for example a foot; but other times, as with “Courbure,” the form, in this case an elbow, feels thoroughly abstract and Brancusi-like.



Frédérique Lucien, "Jardin d'hiver 5" (2022), brass, aluminum, copper, dimensions variable, (photo by A. Ricci, courtesy Galerie Jean Fournier)

Lucien's work is considerably more subversive than it would seem at first. She takes natural things that are either ignored or paid little attention to and pulls them into focus — cutting, slicing, flattening, magnifying, or reducing them. This heightened act of observation, the creation of an abstracted visual grammar of types, renders the objects in question both insistent and elusive, casting them as participants in an act of ongoing yet ambiguous translation.



Frédérique Lucien, *Jardin d'hiver* installation view at the Galerie Jean Fournier (photo by A.Ricci, courtesy Galerie Jean Fournier)

Frédérique Lucien: Jardin d'hiver continues at Galerie Jean Fournier (22 Rue du Bac, 75007 Paris) through July 8. The exhibition was organized by the gallery.

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