

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Jenny Saville



Gagosian Britannia St. ► Jul 26



Flesh. Undulating, gooey flesh. All the great painters of the stuff – Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon, Peter Paul Rubens – depict our bodily matter not as toned, smooth skin but real, wobbly mass. Jenny Saville, the one-time YBA, paints flesh much like those greats, but this show of immense new works multiplies and twists everything so that bodies morph and melt into abstract brush strokes.

Groups of sitters are posed with their bodies intertwined. In 'Olympia' (2013-14), a grumpy-faced model stares away listlessly in the arms of a lover. There's a multitude of body parts to her: three arms, four legs, four boobs, and Saville's brush drags her flesh all over the canvas. It's hasty, twisted, indecisive work, and that's a good thing.

In other paintings ('Odalisque', pictured), Saville's technical skill shines, with faces rendered with photo-realistic precision. It often feels like these are Polaroids that have been left to melt in the sun.

But it's when the faces disappear almost completely that Saville draws you in the most. Broad strokes of charcoal are sketched over intense red or gunmetal grey. Your eyes have to piece together the clues to understand that these too are bodies. That they feel somehow fleshier than the figurative paintings is proof of how good Saville really is.
Eddy Frankel

THE BOTTOM LINE The human body undressed and expressed.