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Art & Culture

Last Days for "Self Care": Sarah Slappey @ Sargent's Daughters, NYC

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[Sarah Slappey](#) told us this recently when we spoke about her recent show that is currently on view at [Sargent's Daughters in NYC](#). Almost one year to date since her last solo show with [Maria Bernheim in Switzerland](#), and [year and half since her solo debut](#), the South Carolina-born artist is presenting a new suite of paintings on canvas and paper entitled *Self Care*.

Staying firmly within her unique aesthetic in which real and artificial swap seats and employing

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peculiar elements from her visual vocabulary, Slappey has created a compelling body of work that speaks about the same subjects, but with a more refined approach both on technical level and conceptually. Mixing the profoundly rendered elements alongside flat, almost graphic ornaments, the images are revealing the artist's love-hate relationship with femininity, speak about gender roles, and metaphorize the body's constraints, especially in the context of societal and cultural expectations. And these subjects are now intensified with a more focused use of a fewer recurring "subjects" such as hands and feet, the employment of suggestive and indicative grid-like backgrounds, and more frequent depictions of blood. Real looking blood. "In the US, when it comes to violence, it operates on two extremes - one is in all of our media to the N-th degree, but at the same time, we don't have sort of a relationship with blood in the body," the artist told us about how experiencing European cultural tradition, and especially Christian iconography, affected her perspective.

In her newest visuals, Slappey is often contrasting the animated, elegant looking hands, and the muscular, anatomically correct, realistically depicted feet. "The hands caress and feet stomp," she explains this obvious distinction and the reason behind approaching the depiction of these two elements in a different manner. "Hands aren't so gross, but feet are gross in the way that I love." And the part that she loves about feet are "the puffy veins in them and the fact that blood pools in certain ways, around the toe knuckle to the bottom of your feet, and the veins sort of curl around in your instep." It is precisely these qualities that create a strong tension in each of the images, as we see these strong and/or delicate limbs getting pierced, pushed, and pulled out of their natural shape, realistic blood dripping down the smooth, yet otherworldly colored skin. Symbolizing the acts of microaggression that we impose onto ourselves to meet certain standards, these experiences stem as far back as the childhood age and the perfect, doll-like outfits of that time. "I think the little boys were playing with GI Joes and we were being constrained and made sure that nothing was out of place," Slappey explains, making it very clear why all those hair clips, pushpins, and safety pins are leaving bloody marks on the bodies she's portraying. And whether it's the cartoonized and delicate hands against the sturdy and pulsating vein-permeated foot in the paintings, or the porous, aged feel of scared limbs vs the flat, graphic, and artificial veil of bows and similar accessories, the images are explicitly showing how astray we went from our natural selves and the price we pay for such self care. "Sasha Bogojev