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The Body Bends When The Room Will Not

In Calvin Miceli-Nelson's new paintings, a dialectic emerges between organic and inorganic forms. Many of the organic, more fluid shapes look like organs—intestines, brains, eggs, and hearts. The more rigid ones are easily identified as houses, cans, and gift boxes. In his paintings, these two forms sometimes merge, troubling the boundary between the container and the contained. The delicate folds of the brain and the water barreling through a fire hydrant share a similar curve. Tellingly, one symbol is found over and over again: a cocoon. In this fragile envelope, the boundary between "in" and "out" is undone.

The works in *The Body Bends When The Room Will Not* are, first and foremost, deeply personal. Under Miceli-Nelson's hand, massive boots rise to the fore, worlds are dwarfed by individual homes, and new fleshy forms are born of childhood heirlooms. It is a dreamscape in which small things take on elephantine proportions, and enormous objects shrink down to fit beneath your shoe. The paintings play with scale, and in so doing contain a lurking menace—that of seeing through a clown mirror, in which the size and meaning of objects are distorted.

However, for the artist, whose experience living with chronic illness informs the works, the world's shifting scale presents an opportunity as well. These paintings testify to the simultaneous fixity and malleability of oppressive structures; they may appear immovable at first, but with time and pressure, they can be altered. If we could all see how easily symbols vanish into the air and swell into reality, we might understand how to change ourselves, and the world too.

-Eli Rudavsky