

# Towards

## Isabel Yellin *The Presence of Absence*

September 9 – October 14, 2023

Towards is pleased to present *The Presence of Absence*, a solo exhibition of new work by Isabel Yellin.

Three metal sculptures hang on a wall accompanied by four paintings. The works hold empty space, voids that can be filled with experience, memories or grief. Absence is of course about loss, not only for what is missing, but also a longing for what could have been. An unknowable future of endless possibilities.

In her 2013 essay *Seeing Absence*, philosopher Anna Farennikova discusses how the perception of absence presents a paradox. In it, she writes

*“On prevailing models of perception, we see only present objects and scenes... So, we cannot literally see something that is not present. This suggests that we never literally perceive absences; instead, we come to believe that something is absent cognitively... But this cognitive explanation does not do justice to the phenomenology. Many experiences of absence possess immediate, perceptual qualities.”*

These perceptual qualities inform Yellin’s most recent work. Using absence and its framing, she examines highly personal yet universal questions. How does one begin to process grief? What does it mean to carry the psychological weight of loss? Her works hover back and forth, oscillating between their rigidity and their softer more organic elements. This duality is a hallmark of Yellin’s practice: structures and systems are created, and then diverted. Hard metal braces against soft silicone. Industrial materials reveal traces of the handmade.

Uniting Yellin’s larger practice is an examination of such fundamental themes as psyche, memory, the body, and grief. To this end, the works within *The Presence of Absence* are less about what is missing, and more about what remains.

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**Isabel Yellin** (b. 1987, New York, NY) received her MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art, London, in 2014. Recent exhibitions include *Something or Other*, Galerie Maria Bernheim, Zurich, 2023; *Black Box* at M. LeBlanc, Chicago, 2022 (solo); and *Show Me as I Want to be Seen*, Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, CA (2018). She is also the curator of an ongoing series of female and non binary sculpture shows, such as *Your Presence is Encouraged*, Nevine’s Yard, 2019; *PSYCHOSOMATIC* at Various Small Fires, LA, 2019; *Signals*, at Someday Gallery, New York, 2022; and *Something or Other*, 2023 at Maria Bernheim, Zurich. Yellin received a 2018 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, and will have her first institutional solo show at the Weisman Museum of Art in California in 2025.