

# LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

**Rachel Lee Hovnanian at Leila Heller Gallery  
Art Platform - Los Angeles  
October 1-3, 2011, L.A. Mart  
Opening September 30**



Rachel Lee Hovnanian, *No Prenup*, 2010. Photograph in archival ink on rag paper, 22 x 28 inches.  
Courtesy the artist and Leila Heller Gallery, New York

New York, NY – Leila Heller Gallery will present a selection of recent photography, sculpture, and installation by American artist Rachel Lee Hovnanian at Art Platform - Los Angeles, October 1-3, 2011 at the L.A. Mart, with an opening preview on September 30.

Hovnanian is known for her ongoing exploration of deep stereotypes as they pertain to female beauty, as well as off-camera realities behind the public illusions of beauty. Her visual vocabulary includes trophies, narcissus flowers, tiaras, sculptures of swimsuits, and cosmetics, and the media environment that surrounds and supports them. Utilizing the large-scale platform of the Texas and California psyche (the places where she spent her formative years), the artist examines beauty and the “trophy beauty” as powerful symbols of contemporary values.

The artist calls attention to society and the media’s standards of beauty in a series of photographs entitled *Texas Beauty Cream*, 2011, that includes actual copy from advertisements for beauty products, such as “I guess mother nature caught up with me after 15 years of marriage...” and “Don’t let aging chew up your body. You have a right to

look your Hollywood best.” A wall sculpture of a medicine cabinet, *Wall of Confidence, Texas Beauty Queen Cream*, 2011, presents more than 200 jars of cream, each with its own sales pitch taken from actual advertisements to women.

Among the highlights of the work on view will be *Beauty Queen Vending Machine*, 2009, a shiny retrofitted carnival game filled with trophies of beauty queens that viewers can use to win a prize with a special token. A sign on the front reads, “Caution: Limited Shelf Life.”

In addition to the exhibition of work by Hovnanian at the Leila Heller Gallery booth, there will also be a separate interactive installation on the first floor of Art Platform- Los Angeles. The site-specific installation, *Fun House Dressing Room*, 2009, depicts a stark white dressing room with fun house mirrors and bathing suits on hangers. The viewer can enter the voice-rigged dressing room and come to one's own conclusions about how women are measured, valued, and objectified. The installation will also include a performance piece with a woman dressed in an exaggeratedly-shaped swimsuit.

Hovnanian's series of photographs, *Too Good To Be True*, 2011, further amplify the pressures of beauty and include a corporate Galahad enthroned on his wing chair; preening bodybuilders; a sleeping beauty surrounded by her paraphernalia; and a meat saw representing the cutting agonies of divorce. In one image entitled *The Collector*, 2011, a literal trophy wife takes her place with other trophies in her husband's collection. Utilizing the trappings of today's cultural imagery, these works are intended to jolt perceptions of beauty and reference how the depiction of beauty in the media fuels women's anxieties.

Rachel Lee Hovnanian lives and works in New York City. She has had solo exhibitions in New York, Chicago, Madrid, Barcelona, and Antwerp. She exhibited with Leila Heller Gallery in Dubai and at Abu Dhabi Art last year. Her work is currently on view in Manarat Saadiyat Island, a public exhibition space, promoting the next cultural hub of Abu Dhabi. Hovnanian most recently set up a summer studio in Shanghai and will be exhibiting in China this spring.

**Leila Heller Gallery** is located at 568 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY, and 39 East 78th Street, New York, NY, 212.249.7695, [leilahellergallery.com](http://leilahellergallery.com). For further information, please contact Lauren Pollock at [Lauren@leilahellergallery.com](mailto:Lauren@leilahellergallery.com)

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