

*For Immediate Release*

## **Artist Establishes Connection between 1960s Genetically Modified Food and Digital Technology in New Exhibition**

**Rachel Lee Hovnanian Explores Technology and Human Relationships in *Plastic Perfect***

New York, NY, June 18, 2014 – Leila Heller Gallery is delighted to announce *Plastic Perfect*, the provocative and riveting solo exhibition by **Rachel Lee Hovnanian**, on view from **September 4 – October 18, 2014** at **Leila Heller Gallery**, located at **568 West 25th Street**. A reception for the artist will take place **Thursday, September 4, 2014** from **6PM - 8PM**.

In *Plastic Perfect*, Hovnanian revisits obsession, narcissism and intimacy in a collection of interactive installations, sculpture, video and photography to explore where our natural and synthetic worlds collide. The artist takes us back 50 years to answer questions about digital technology today and its future trajectory, challenging viewers to reevaluate his or her own relationship with the medium.

In the 1960s, genetically modified, sugary cereals became a staple in many homes. The fun commercials, sweet taste, and the convenience it brought moms convinced everyone it was *Grrrrreat*. Owing to chronic health conditions and obesity amongst Baby Boomers, we now know better. Perhaps like the sugar rush the Boomers received from their cereal, Generation X, Y and Z are too feeling a similar sensation when using digital technology. Have the conveniences of technology distracted us from considering how this may affect us in 50 years? Hovnanian does not tell us, but she does suggest that our obsession with technology may lead to something unimaginable: enter the engineered child or the “perfect baby.”

*Plastic Perfect* addresses this notion in three large-scale installations: *Perfect Baby Showroom*, *In Loco Parentis*, and *Foreplay*, and a series of accompanying works. In *Perfect Baby Showroom*, the perfect human is available in a laboratory meets shopping mall where parents determine the lives and physical characteristics of their babies. Arrayed in straight rows and displayed in neat stainless steel racks, Rachel’s hyper-realistic perfect babies are miracles of nature, yet they are also inventory; infants to be loved, yet products to be prized. Their heads rest on pillows filled with colorful genetically modified, sugary cereals puffed full of air.

In the site-specific installation, *In Loco Parentis*, we find the “perfect baby” as a toddler. She sits alone in a high chair in a kitchen, transfixed with a high-resolution screen. Around her is chaos: the floor overflows with Cheerios and a gigantic white mouse eats its fill of cheese right from the refrigerator. With everyone preoccupied with a device, the mice are free to roam the house. The “perfect baby” is alone while technology takes over. This concept persists in *Poor Teddy*, a wall installation that depicts a teddy bear with a knife stuck in his chest. In this example, the quintessential comfort toy is dead because the contemporary child prefers digital devices. With the mice already in control of the house, they too swarm a teary-eyed teddy.

In *Foreplay* – a mixed media installation with film and photography – Hovnanian highlights the irony of society’s infatuation with hyper-connectivity: the vehicle meant to make us feel more connected actually robs us from a virtuous and true intimate connection with the present. The “perfect baby’s” parents are too distracted with their devices to notice the chaos that engulfs their child; not to mention the lack of intimacy in their own relationship – they both lie in bed engaged with their screens, not each other.

**Rachel Lee Hovnanian** is an American contemporary artist born in Parkersburg, West Virginia, and currently living and working in New York City. She received her B.F.A. at the University of Texas, Austin. She has shown her socially explosive multi-disciplinary installations in the U.S., Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

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