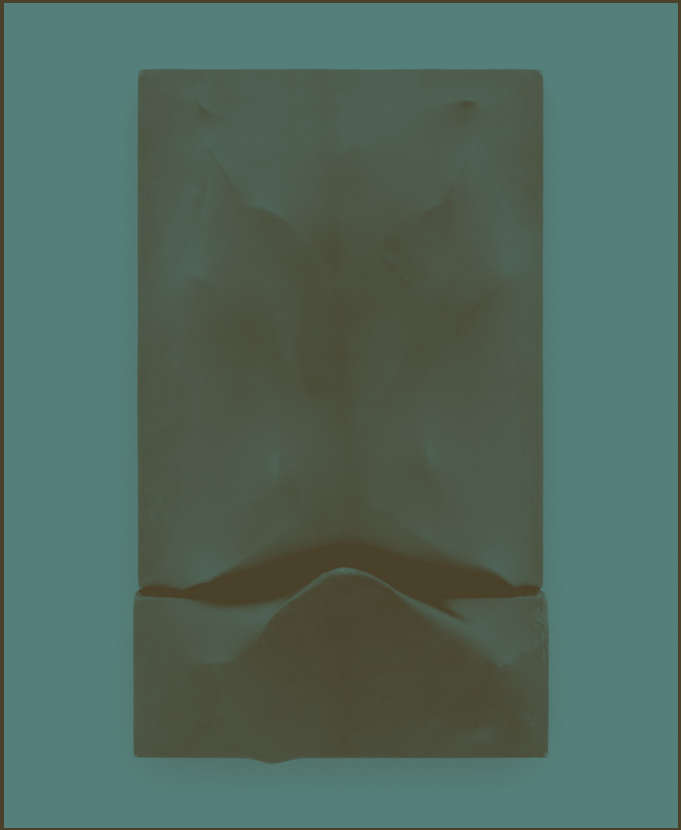
Manon Wertenbroek
'In guts and heads'
7 Mar – 25 Apr 2026

Rose Easton

Text by Alison Sperling

It may strike visitors that Manon Wertenbroek's show *In guts and heads* is, despite its name, quite decapitated. The pieces here suggest that the head and its contents also reside elsewhere. Works hang not as body parts but as parts of bodies that displayed together evoke not (merely, or undeniably) morbidity, but more a kind of impossible yearning for completeness. Indeed, Wertenbroek is interested in the ways the body is always both in and out of control, self-sovereign and yet historically a site of experimentation without the subject's consent, and subjected still to systems of violence, objectification and surveillance. The body as a vessel of entrapment, a severing from the self, can be as much a confinement as it can be a site of liberation.

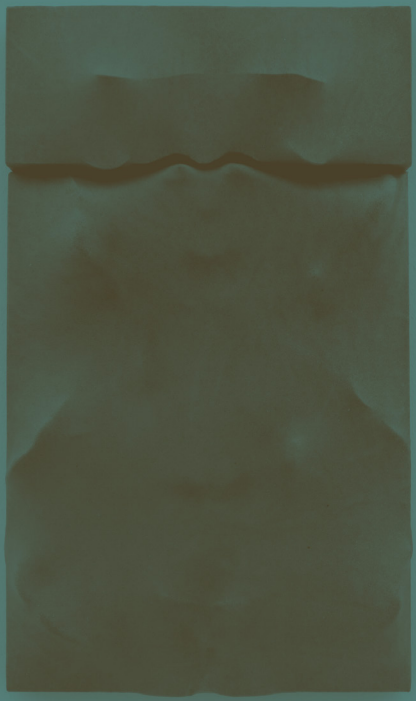
Skin is perhaps most central to this tension both materially – stretched and lubricated continuously with glycerin – and conceptually – a breathable organ, an apparatus of encasement that conceals as it reveals, veins from the animal-body it once held together stretched anew over metal and wood to acquire new form in *Body Talk* (all works 2026). The works are not static nor fixed but appear almost in motion, whether they are attempting escape or just always shifting to find a form to settle into as in *Sense of Excess*. The colour scheme, too, evokes the body in-flux, the brownish metallic red hues of menstrual blood and the greyish blues of decomposing flesh draw our attention to the repurposed skins from the fashion industry via the global meat industry.



Manon Wertenbroek
Eat, compete, reproduce, repeat, 2026
Wood, metal, paper, textile,
acrylic, varnish, leather
64 × 38 × 7 cm
25 ¼ × 15 × 2 ¾ in

The figures, if they are to be read as such, memorialise bodies past, those attempted to be stripped down, as it were, by structures of power, capital, and industry, here reimagined and reformed to draw attention to how the skin, in Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacy's words, "becomes a site of contest over identity – over what it means to be a subject – but a contest that is very much specific to a particular time and place" (*Thinking Through the Skin*, 2001).

For the first time, Wertenbroek's sketches are shown here, a glimpse into her process; sketches are then drawn onto wood, sculpted into wire shape, filled in part with paper mâché, and stretched over with scraps of leather from cow, horse, and lamb. There are discernible parts of bodies – a pelvis here, stack of ribs elsewhere (though a few too many, or too spaced out to be read as merely human) – that construct an assemblage in the space that is disquieting in its arrangement, each piece estranged from any singular creature that comprises it. These impossibilities between bodies, those of ever inhabiting another's skin, as in *My mother was my future as well as my past* where two canvases push up against one another, reveal a certain challenge to the common refrain that skin is all surface, all superficiality. Instead, *In guts and heads* shows that what is skin deep is in fact ripe with history and meaning, etched and stitched and glossed not only from above but from what lies underneath.



Manon Wertenbroek
Bonds of love, 2026
Wood, metal, paper, textile, acrylic, varnish, leather
64 × 38 × 5.5 cm
25 ¼ × 15 × 2 ⅛ in

Manon Wertenbroek (b. 1991, Lausanne, Switzerland) lives and works in Paris. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Visual Communication from ECAL (École Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne) in 2014. Recent solo and duo exhibitions include: *Home Auto-Psy*, Lo Brutto Stahl, Paris (2024); *Wertenbroek/Wray*, with Randy Wray, Lo Brutto Stahl, Paris (2023); *Refaire corps*, with Loredana Sperini, Lighthouse, Zurich (2023). Her work has also been included in group exhibitions at institutions including Muzeum Susch; Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne; Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris; Zuzeum Art Center, Riga; Foam Museum, Amsterdam; Istituto Svizzero, Rome; and Swiss Art Awards, among others. In 2017, Wertenbroek was awarded the Swiss Art Award by the Federal Office of Culture. She has also received the Swiss Design Award and the Pro Helvetia Prize. In 2018, she completed a one-year residency at the Swiss Institute in Rome. More recently, she has undertaken residencies at the Sigg Art Foundation in AlUla (2023) and Pavillon Southway, Marseille (2022). She is shortlisted for the Prix Reiffers Initiatives 2026, opening in April 2026. Her work is held in several public and private collections, including Foam Museum, Amsterdam; Zuzeum Art Center, Riga; Collection d'art de la Ville de Lausanne, Lausanne; and Bank Vontobel, Zurich.

Opening, Friday 6 March, 6 – 8pm
Open, Wednesday – Saturday, 12 – 6pm

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Link to list of works

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