

Artist Resources – Jenny Saville (British, b. 1970)



Saville in her Oxford studio, 2020
Photography: Amanda Fordyce

[Saville at Gagosian Gallery](#)

[Saville at Saatchi Gallery](#)

In her first solo exhibition, [Gagosian's 1999 Territories](#), Saville celebrated the humanity of bodies and the raw truth of flesh in unflinching nudes. Three year's later, she continued her critique of beauty standards as a subject in [Close Contact](#), with photographer Glen Luchford.

"I never questioned my ambition. I never thought: I'm a girl, I can't do this. It was only when I got to art school that I realised that the great artists of the past were not women. I had a sort of epiphany in the library: where are all the women? Only then, as the truth dawned, did I start to feel pissed off," Saville commented during a [2012 studio visit with The Guardian](#). She also discussed the daily work of being an artist and her exhibition at [Modern Art Oxford](#) during a studio visit with [The Royal Academy](#).

During a [2016 interview with The Huffington Post](#), Saville discussed her relationship with art history, representation, identity, and the body in conjunction with her exhibition, [Erota, at Gagosian London](#). "My mediation is through the body."

[Saville spoke at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art](#) in conjunction with her participation in [2018's NOW](#). "I often now start not knowing what I'm going to do...and that's a really exciting way to work because you're on a journey and it's your creativity in the moment in the act of making that's your journey," she [reflected in a gallery feature](#) about her new work. In [a collaborative performance](#), dancers from the Performing Arts Studio Scotland, Edinburgh College and students in Performance Costume at Edinburgh College of Art shared inspiration from Saville's forms, colors, and textures.

In 2019, Saville painted a new self portrait in response to an example from one of her greatest influences, Rembrandt. "The vocabulary of painting is all in this picture," she remarked in [a video interview](#). "It's like deconstructing a great piece of Beethoven...Rembrandt that level of humanity, of someone who can turn that screw inside you."

Gagosian gallery closed 2020 with [a suite of new work](#) completed by Saville while in lockdown in Oxford, titled after the Greek personification of Hope, the only remnant saved in Pandora's Box after its opening, *Elpis*. Saville commented on her experience of the pandemic and how her new show relates to her practice in an [interview with Financial Times](#), "Because I'm figurative—staunchly figurative, I'd like to say...I'm interested in the space between figurative and abstract. It's the space for so much intellectual and imaginative interplay. If you let go of the figurative image, you give up that space."

"In the last four or five years, my preoccupation has been how to put all of this idea of having multiple realities that we live now [social media, technology], how do I put that in pictorial form, that's been the scaffolding of what I've been trying to do. Because we don't live in one reality now," Saville explained in [a 2020 Zoom interview](#) with the National Portrait Gallery. Saville also spoke with *The Art Newspaper* [podcast A Brush With...](#) about her artistic background, and [Gagosian Quarterly](#) about books that brought her solace in 2020.



Saville, 2012
Photography: Robin Friend



Jenny Saville (British, b. 1970)

Title TBC, 2020

Oil on linen

Peterson Family Collection; L2020:123.1

Born in Cambridge, Jenny Saville rose to prominence while attending the Glasgow School of Art and was associated with a group of upcoming artists in the early 1990s known as the Young British Artists, which included such diverse talents as Cecily Brown (also on view) and Damien Hirst. Like Brown, Saville was driven by a desire to reinvigorate the genre of figurative painting. Her work remains intertwined with art historical precedent, diverging via a raw and almost reverential attention toward imperfection. Saville celebrates real bodies, including her own, fascinated since childhood by natural physical distortion and the appearance of flesh as she observed the world around her. As a student, she also honed her eye through visits to morgues and plastic surgery operating rooms. **Title TBC** is from a series of new work inspired by the remnants of Hope left behind in Pandora's Box. It displays the intimacy and textured vitality Saville brings to her portraits, celebrating the totality of what it means to live in a body: the fragility and strength, the animal mass and human interiority, and the infinite spectrum of identity.

On view February 3 – May 9, 2021