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Hayden Dunham Makes Art You Can Inhale and Drink

By ANN BINLOT APRIL 6, 2016



Hayden Dunham setting up her exhibition “Bio:Dip” at Red Bull Studios New York in Chelsea.
Yana Paskova for The New York Times

Age 27

Hometown Austin, Tex.

Now Lives Ms. Dunham splits her time between a rowhouse in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, and a studio in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. She also has a ceramics studio in Austin, Tex.

Claim to Fame Ms. Dunham is an emerging multimedia artist known for her fluid art installations as well as for her alter ego, QT, a pop singer. For a 2014 performance art project, QT released a single, “Hey QT,” that promoted a fictional energy drink called DrinkQT. The bubbly pop song reached No. 14 on Pitchfork’s Best Tracks of 2014 and No. 4 on Spin’s list of the 101 Best Songs of 2014.

Big Break After showing at the New Museum and MoMA PS1, Ms. Dunham was included in a three-person show, “Everything’s,” at the Andrea Rosen Gallery in Chelsea last year. For the show, she created a chemical called Gel

that took the form of a white liquid, a solid and a gas — the latter of which was pumped through the gallery's air vents. In January, the gallery announced that it was representing the artist. "For any age, Hayden Dunham is one of the most unique, talented and innovative individuals I have engaged with," Andrea Rosen said in a statement.

Latest Project The curator Neville Wakefield chose Ms. Dunham for the two-part exhibition "Bio:Dip," which is at Red Bull Studios New York in Chelsea through April 17. For her project, Ms. Dunham visited sites in China, Iceland and Texas that generate energy, and created her own energy-systems-cum-sculptures by tapping into the building's HVAC system. An ice sculpture melts into a vapor, while water in a black pool starts as a liquid and turns into an inhalable substance.

Next Thing She is furiously creating new work for her debut solo exhibition in 2017 with the Andrea Rosen Gallery. She is mum about the show. "I can't talk about it really," she said.

Art Speak Ms. Dunham likes to refer to her various bodies of work as separate "systems." "It usually starts with an interest in a specific idea," she said. "I tend to work concept first, and then create a system, and the sculptures wind up being byproducts of the system. So if there's anything physical that's produced, they'll show up as byproducts."

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