

## Nicole Farhi: Folds review

Art [📍 Beaux Arts, Mayfair](#) [📅 Until Saturday March 2 2019](#) ★★★★★



Nicole Farhi is into flesh origami. The concertinaed indents of a bent knee, the twisted softness of part-rotated belly fat, the puckered skin of a damn-it's-cold areola, that kind of thing.

To produce her new series of sculptures based on the bodily beauty of larger women, the artist made plaster casts directly from the physiques of two friends, then re-cast the results in bronze and Jesmonite. One of her models was Sue Tilley aka the woman painted by Lucian Freud in 'Benefits Supervisor Sleeping' and other works.

Before becoming a full-time sculptor, Farhi ran her eponymous fashion company. Her new curvaceous creations are described in the exhibition's publicity as an 'antidote to the fashion industry', and it would be easy enough to slap a 'body positive' label on the expansive flank of one, then skip off home to dinner without another thought.

But along with being bang on trend, Farhi's art is also ripped through with references to antiquity and an age way before supermodels. The doughy rolls around the middle of sculptures 'Hebe' and 'Ceres' echo the much-replicated 'Crouching Venus' of Greece and Rome – and Farhi's system of naming can't help but feel like a giant signpost.

Zoning in on one section of the body and leaving the edges ragged also makes these artworks look like relics unearthed on an archaeological dig – a slab of Parthenon marble, say, or the armless 'Venus de Milo'.

Unlike the super-smooth statues of old, however, these contemporary offerings reveal every human detail. Stand close and constellations of pores and hair follicles become visible. Faintly stretch-marked boobs, Rubenesque thighs rich with cellulite and dimpled lower backs – on Farhi's modern goddesses it's all worth folding at the waist to worship.

By: Rosemary Waugh