

[VISUAL ARTS](#)

Andrius Alvarez-Backus '25 Debuts Solo Exhibition 'I Want to Know, I Need to Know' at Eli Klein Gallery

By Emily Hollander
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[/ Want to Know, I Need to Know](#) [↗](#), Eli Klein Gallery's first solo exhibition of work by interdisciplinary artist [Andrius Alvarez-Backus '25](#) [↗](#), opened on Saturday, February 21, and will be on view through May 9, 2026.

The exhibition debuts major multimedia sculptures and a series of works on panel created during Alvarez-Backus's current residency at Smack Mellon. Informed by his upbringing by medical practitioners and a series of recent health incidents experienced by himself and his family, the new works translate the language of surgery—incision, dissection, and stitch—into artistic practice.

In the gallery, wounds and their repairs represent family inheritance both literally and figuratively. In *I Was Softer Than* (16" x 36" x 23", epoxy, acrylic, resin, colored pencil, ceramic tile, wood, mirrored glass tiles, foam, 2025–2026), a halved disco ball reveals a flesh interior—a glossy cross section of the human thigh, oddly reminiscent of a grapefruit. *To Whom I Belong* (29 ½" x 10" x 19",



wood, leather, epoxy, bronze, acrylic, 2025) features a phallus protruding from the lap of a chair. Collapsing the boundaries between human and object, Alvarez-Backus calls familiar roles into question. In medical and familial contexts, humans are both the victims and perpetrators of trauma; as an artist, he acts on and is acted upon by his materials.

In a conversation about the exhibition with Emma Cieslik of [Whitehot Magazine](#) [↗](#), Alvarez-Backus said, "In centering what I call 'thingness,' I hope to find an unexpected agency within objecthood, one that exists between agency and passivity."



In *I Want to Know, I Need to Know*, Alvarez-Backus finds thingness in his own body, from which the molds of human figures are cast. Just as we attach memories to trinkets and tchotchkes, his body is a vessel for his Filipinx heritage, his queerness, and his family history. Through taking apart and reconstructing his own form, he imagines new possibilities for healing—possibilities that emphasize the surreality and ambiguity of existing in a body.

I Want to Know, I Need to Know is on view at Eli Klein Gallery in New York City February 21–May 9, 2026.

Andrius Alvarez-Backus is a Brooklyn-based interdisciplinary artist working across sculpture, drawing, and painting. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art (2023), and his Master of Fine Art from Columbia University (2025). His work has been shown internationally at the Wallach Art Gallery, Fragment Gallery, SK Gallery, Plato Gallery, Chelsea Walls, Black Brick Project, the Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition, and The Blanc, among others. His work has been featured in *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Hyperallergic*, and *The Boston Art Review*. Currently, Alvarez-Backus is an artist-in-residence at Smack Mellon 2025-2026, and serves as the Communications Director at Queer!Art, the New York City-based nonprofit empowering LGBTQ+ artists across generations and disciplines.

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