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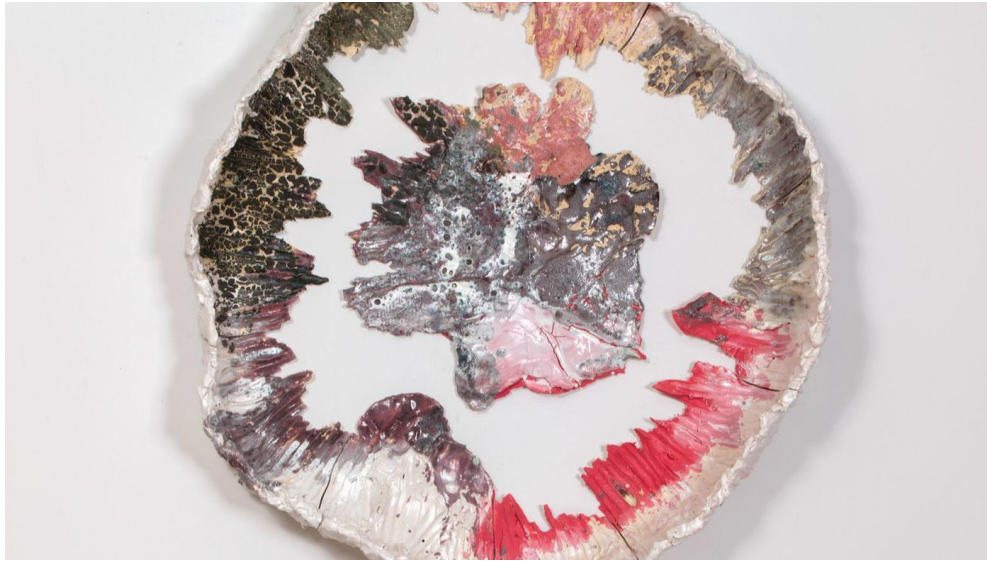


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REVIEW ARTS & CULTURE ENTERTAINMENT

Brie Ruais puts all of her body weight into each sculpture she makes

By SHARON MIZOTA MAY 19, 2018 | 8:00 AM



Brie Ruais, "Attempting to Hold the Center, 135 lbs" (detail), 2018. (Jason Mandella)



In works of clay at Night Gallery, Brooklyn artist Brie Ruais takes up the mantle of a body-conscious strain of feminist sculpture. Lynda Benglis' messy, spreading latex floor pieces come to mind, as do Janine Antoni's blocks of chocolate and lard sculpted using nothing but her mouth.

Whereas these works evoke the female body in order to reframe artistic conventions, Ruais takes a more primal, personal approach. Her mostly circular works each begin with a mass of clay equal in weight to her own body. She then sculpts the work on the floor, from its center, pushing and scraping the soft material into circles, spirals and star shapes.

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The pieces bear the marks of this process; they are whorled and rutted from fingers, elbows and boot treads. The resulting structures are then cut into segments, glazed in multiple colors, fired and hung on the wall. They are compelling documents of physical presence as well as reflections upon its limits.

The works in this show were inspired by W.B. Yeats' poem "The Second Coming," with its imagery of spiraling disintegration. "Coming Back Around, 132 lbs" is a single trailing loop around an empty center, a fantastic, snake-like peninsula encircling the self.



Brie Ruais, "Coming Back Around, 132 lbs," 2018. (Jason Mandella)

"Attempting to Hold the Center, 135 lbs" is more fortress-like: a perimeter pushed out and up from an interior island. "Spreading out from Center Turning Left, 135 lbs (Widening Gyre)" resembles a starfish, its dynamically swirling limbs anchored by two distinct knee prints at its core.



Brie Ruais, "Spreading Out From Center Turning Left, 135 lbs (Widening Gyre)," 2018. (Jason Mandella)

Each work is a sculpture, certainly, but also documentation of a performance. Underscoring this relationship are two untitled works in unfired clay on the gallery floor: a gray spiral doubling back on itself in the center of the gallery, and a mass of red clay, shoved up against one side of the doorway. These pieces, which will change subtly over time as they dry, bring us into Ruais' process, a choreographed dance in clay.

Her works explore the limits of the physical — how far a body, a person, might push and shape another body, the clay, from a certain perspective and point in time. The sculptures literally record the limits of a body's reach, but also invite reflection on how one's presence might leave other kinds of traces behind, decaying over time.

Night Gallery, 2276 E. 16th St., L.A. Through May 26; closed Sundays and Mondays. (323) 589-1135, www.nightgallery.ca



Brie Ruais, untitled work at Night Gallery, 2018. (Nik Massey)

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