

turbulence

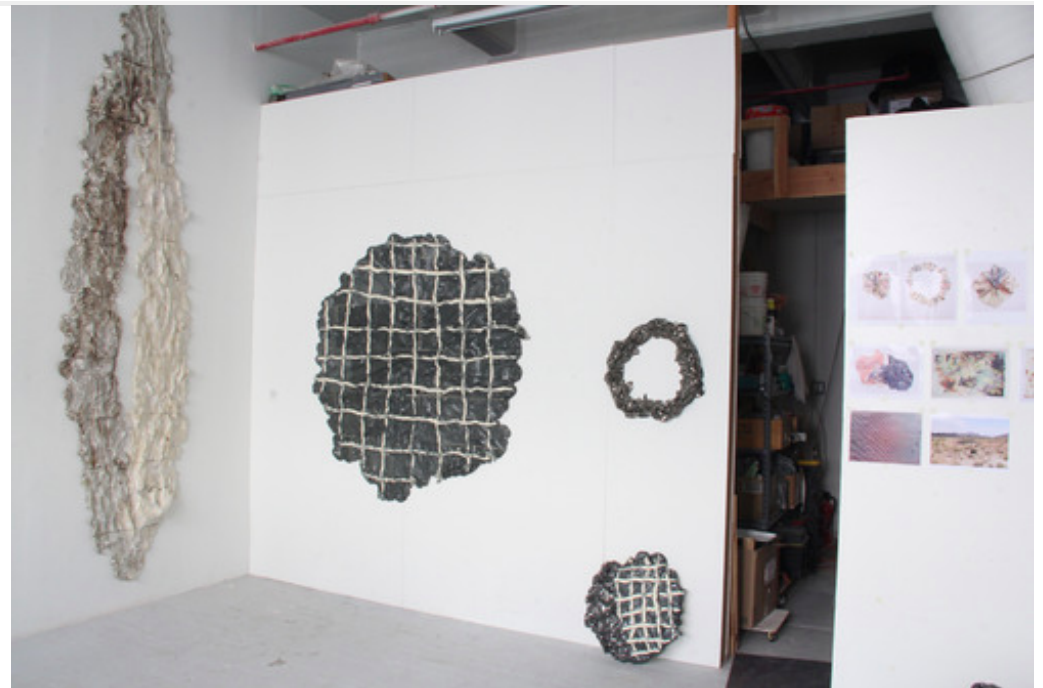
Contact Info

PRIL 30TH 2014

Brie Ruais

Guiding sculptor Brie Ruais' inquiry into the corporeal experience is a practice characterized by three constant conditions. The first concerns measurement. At their lightest, the masses of clay with which she works precisely match her then-current body weight. The second: she does not use tools. Third, each piece begins with a written set of directions describing what she'll need to do in order to complete it. Whether she chooses to pummel three hundred pounds of clay into a flat, neat-looking ring, or, suspend in the air until it solidifies there a multiple-dozen-pound swath of plaster-soaked fabric, these parameters are designed to acutely intensify the physical part of her art-making process.

Context is critical to grasp here. Although her utilization of a script, for example, certainly locates her methods within the

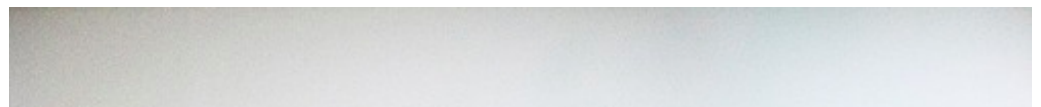


framework of Process Art, her investigation is more outwardly-focused, dealing with physicality as it relates to human corporeality. During the part of our conversation about her work's resemblance to the earthen landscape, she thoughtfully offers, "Everything in the distance is pure perception."

"You're only really familiar with the earth or landscape that's in close proximity to you. You haven't been there touching that tree or climbing that mountain...or even if you have, [while physically separated from it] you're just imagining it. What's real is what's in close proximity to your body, what's in your immediate physical experience"

At its core, this statement acknowledges the particular type of affirmation that physical sensation provides. It recognizes the literalness of physicality and the distinctive sort of reckoning and orientation that it obligates. Ruais' fascination with the physical part of art-making begins here, with an urge to explore these fundamental qualities. Her parameters, then, aid her investigation by purifying the Making part of the process, by stripping away from "putting-together" the figuring, the styling, the loving and hating. They clear a space for an unencumbered physical experience.

In spite of Ruais' targeted focus on the intricacies of physicality, she presents physicality itself as one layer in the multi-tired phenomenon of experience. She tells me, "The reason I even started with these works is because I had this strong feeling, this strong drive to spread out the clay like flaying skin or cutting open a fish. Just spreading the body out." As this statement implies, the concepts from which her pieces generate are often quasi or overtly metaphysical. Consider *How One Can Be Two*, 300 lbs, (Two people's combined body weight in clay) or *Two Ways Towards Center*, 300 lbs. Both derive from an ongoing contemplation of the idea of coupling, of two people loving and working and living one



another. She made *How One Can Be Two* by flattening a three hundred-pound mass of clay — the equivalent of two human body weights — into a large, flat circle, and then tearing out a sizable portion of the middle. The two pieces were displayed adjacent to one another, the ring on the wall, the circle on the floor. For *Two Ways Towards Center*, she pushed her body weight in clay toward another person, who simultaneously pushed his body weight in clay towards her. When their separate trails of clay met, both pushed their remainders vertically. Note that in both works, the fundamental, literal-most definition of coupling is doubling. Played out, then, Ruais' examination resembles a dragging down, of the emotional, the mental, and sometimes even the numinous, into the seeable, touchable undeniable

Of the many features of this work that deserve attention, perhaps most admirable is its thorough dynamism. In working through her ideas, she deftly employs two concurrently operating approaches. In addition to the careful, thoughtfully deductive one outlined above, the work also thrives on an important inductive, more inquisitive one. This approach is anchored in her decision to work in quantities of clay equivalent to specific human body weights. Combined with the other Conditions, this ensures that the Making part of the process is always an experiment, always an investigation of physicality's fundamental qualities. Recall that at this juncture, she would have already determined the form and steps for completion; these will not be changed. So, an inability to get the clay into that form in the thirty minutes to an hour before it dries means not only that the piece is failed, more pointedly, that she was unable to negotiate the clay's physicality with her corporeality. Should one break, as had happened to her multiple times working on the *Holding Up A Space* series, (she explains that many pieces failed because she simply couldn't hold the fifty plus pounds of fabric in the air, straight out in front of her face for the twenty minutes it takes to dry) the exact same is true.



Thus, Brie Ruais manages to present a body of work that is deceptively dynamic. The crude, sometimes brutal look of her sculptures do not immediately suggest such an intricate, sophisticated creation process. Presenting art as open and curious as it is resolute and clever, this is a body of work truly deserving a closer look.

Upcoming, she will be showing in Los Angeles at Marc Selwyn Fine Art (in a 2 person show with Anna Betbeze). The show opens July 12th and runs through August 9th.

Posted at [9:43am](#).

JANUARY 11TH 2014

Thought Forms || Amanda B. Friedman

Amanda B. Friedman's big, curious *Thought Forms* are absorbing. The first look insists on a closer one, and closer ones after that. They have peculiar names, unpredictable boundaries, and striking coloring. Edges folded away from the wall or ceiling or bookcase to which they're mounted reveal deliberate painting on the hidden side. Everything about them attracts attention, and this is exactly as Friedman would have it. To attract attention – emotional attention in particular – is the work's central aspiration.

Each represents something that Friedman has personally experienced, and she names them accordingly. Titles like *Forward*, or *Focus*, or *Vague Religious Feeling*, coupled with her passionate employ of color, texture, and dimension make them feel revealing

