

ABOUT

Carol Bruns (b. Des Moines, Iowa 1943) is an artist living in Brooklyn, New York, working in sculpture and drawing. She graduated NYU 1966 in Fine Arts, then attended the Art Students League, NYC and l'Academie de La Grande Chaumiere, Paris. She first exhibited in 1975 at OK Harris Gallery showing wall works made from found supports cloaked with cloth and thin, colored plaster. In 1980 she was guest artist at the Caraccio Etching Studio, Orion Editions published her prints, and in 2002 she received a printmaking fellowship at the Women's Studio Workshop. From 2000-2006 she was in four two-person exhibitions at the Tew Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia. Group exhibitions continued throughout this time as well as community organizing (Dumbo Open Studios), curating (*Persona, A New Look at Portraits* 1997; *Festival of Political Pleasure* 2017), publishing artist's books (*Pages*, with Robert Jacks), and stage décor (Bellerophon Dance Company). In 2013 she was interviewed by Goriky's Granddaughter, and in 2019 received a Tree of Life grant. Her most recent exhibitions were at The Parlour Bushwick in 2015, Sculpture Space in Long Island City, SRO Gallery in Brooklyn in 2017-18, and Zurcher Gallery 2022. Ms. Bruns also writes art essays and reviews exhibitions, two most recently published in d'Art International and artcritical.com.

STATEMENT

I've lived 79 years now---call me The Fossil, living in an era of emergency. In this lifetime I've witnessed the American oligarchy rising to within reach of absolute power, grossly enriching itself from wars and obscene defense budgets, all the while avoiding the people's needs for jobs, health, education, and safety from gun violence. On an individual level, it is an alienated political environment that deforms and diminishes peoples' possibilities for a good life.

When I began making art about 1965, my experiences of feeling miserable, inferior, and stuck drove me to a continuing process of seeking self-truth by meditation and reading psychology, especially the Jungians. From necessity I've cultivated a relationship with the unconscious as a healing process and creative muse, by means of dream work and yoga practices. I've observed it transform the destructive within into meaningful sculpture and drawings that reclaim energy operating in the core of the self. Consulting this inner source and converting its dark elements to a social purpose gives my art its coherence.

As a student I accepted the tradition of drawing the figure for its value as a way of seeing, a discipline of visual thinking, and a symbol of human potential and mystery. Under gifted teachers I began to draw the life model in a special way: extending the gaze beyond the surface to feel its spirit and movement, in contrast to the classical method of a detached observer rendering anatomy. The figure's meaning turns around as a question, what are we as humans? As the decades went by, the sculpted figures deepened and retained these roots. My inner life groped through mythic realms in a process that is itself mythic--- a descent to the underworld where characters, objects, and events are both real and unreal at the same time, condensed in their meaning as are dreams.

From 1995-2000 I worked in small-sized wax, cast into bronze, which featured theatrical movement of the figure inhabited by my youth experiences in dancing, horse riding, and skating. Around 2001 I evolved the dimensions to a much larger human-size and to other sculpture materials that reflected new contents---mythic structures alive in the unconscious. When the figures stopped moving, they emphasize a place outside of time, and express a stylistic affinity with pre-industrial art, societies who live sustainably, in a balance with nature.

My art is based on improvisation and risk despite the contradiction to sculptural processes. With a simple vocabulary of newspaper, cardboard, styrofoam packing forms, bamboo, plaster, steel, cement, and finishing paper, I construct and invent wall-mounted masks, freestanding figures, and heads. A unique feature of the process is a pliable, self-made paper laminate that can form hollow, light shapes that rumple and bump in a handmade, organic way. This material positions the human as part of nature and implies that psychologically, when humans set themselves apart from the inherent limits of nature, destructive forces within are unleashed. This idea of nature is set against machined, synthetic, and consumeristic shapes that might conjure the wild capitalism of our time. These forms structure a complex vision of conflicts, feelings, emotions, and struggles from living in this time.