

ABOUT

Carol Bruns (b. 1943, Des Moines, Iowa) is an artist based in Brooklyn, New York, focusing on sculpture and drawing. She earned a degree in Fine Arts from NYU in 1966, subsequently studying at the Art Students League in New York City, and l'Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris. Bruns began exhibiting her work in 1975 at OK Harris Gallery, where she presented wall pieces crafted from found materials, cloth, and thin layers of colored plaster.

In 1980, she was a guest artist at the Caraccio Etching Studio, and her prints were later published by Orion Editions. In 2002, she received a printmaking fellowship from the Women's Studio Workshop. Between 2000 and 2006, she participated in four two-person exhibitions at the Tew Gallery in Atlanta, Georgia, while continuing to exhibit in group shows and engage in community and curatorial projects. Notable efforts include organizing Dumbo Open Studios, curating *Persona: A New Look at Portraits* (1997) and *Festival of Political Pleasure* (2017), publishing artists' books (*Pages*, with Robert Jacks), and creating stage décor for the Bellerophon Dance Company.

Bruns was featured in a 2013 interview by *Gorky's Granddaughter*.

Her recent exhibitions include The Parlour Bushwick (2015), Sculpture Space in Long Island City, SRO Gallery in Brooklyn (2017-18), and Zurcher Gallery (2021 and 2023). She also held a solo exhibition at White Columns in 2023. In 2024, she published *A View*, a 100-page book of drawings and photographs.

Bruns has received numerous grants and residencies, including the recent: 2025: Monson Residency, Monson, Maine 2024: MyMA Grant and VCCA Residency, Amherst, Virginia 2023: Saltonstall Residency, Ithaca, New York 2019: Tree of Life Grant 2018: Artists' Fellowship Grant

STATEMENT

The body in my art represents concern for the human subject, and includes both an inner and a public self. The concept of body grounds the human in a sensual object, countering the cultural tendency to detach from physical reality or view the body as a machine. As the *dissenting body* its public self joins the corporeal and political in resistance to oppression and striving for freedom, utopian thoughts that have lit Western culture for its entire history. It contests received ideas about history, art history, taste, and what a female is. The *vision body* makes a place for the potentials of the inner self--- expanded emotions, the ineffable, the local, poetic, and eccentric; psyche, spirit, and humor. The work embodies its themes in a wide range of historical conventions as full figures, heads, masks, and bust from the ancient world, folk art, to modern times.

The radical modernist tradition is remade in this work.

I make art as an Other, a female of ambivalent regard in the patriarchal world. In the face of unimaginable brutality, exploitation, and oppression, the aesthetic art work might look and be impotent. However, for a better world each must contribute what one does best in the complex matrix of resistance. By action in the world, one never can know for certain its consequences.

One tactic of the sculpture is visual pleasure, evoking mythic Eros (desire) by means of a neutral palette that brings out subtleties of

shape, line, volume, and texture. Aesthetics can move a viewer beyond everyday life to savor another realm, temporarily an end in itself, suspended from practical worlds. The viewer potentially returns inspired with new thoughts and feeling from its experiential excursions.

Another means of its visual engagement is the drama of opposing qualities such as between plastic and wood-derived paper and plant-derived paste. For this I use found styrofoam packing elements and *paper laminates*, a material I developed to create hollow, lightweight, wrinkly forms by layering newspaper with rice paste. I evolved a brush-on *finishing plaster* to complete it with a firm shell yet tactile softness. In this juxtaposition the world is revealed as both the binaries, not either/or with the implication that we have a choice, both personally and politically. We can live as both a body and a mind; value the analytic/rational and the holistic, inclusive, intuitive, and poetic.

These two sculptures are examples: Surveillance State is a squarish wall-mounted head, spiked with aggressive eyes and a gaping mouth, capturing the pervasive anxiety of being watched in an era of expanding government surveillance and Tech data gathering. Its bland gray color indicates how such operations shade off from view and only exist as an idea, unless you become an individual target for harassment such as journalists and activists endure. Corporate State, made from cardboard, paper, plaster, bitumen, features the politically commemorative bust-form, hanging on the wall, representing the corporate "person", a current dominating power, shadowy, bulging and belching its volumes into space, colored by its signature material, petroleum.

Now an eighty-one year old, the fruition of my lifelong focus on the human subject continues to unfold.