

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

Seeing public life in my figurative art works is partially a way of processing the chaotic, violent world of crisis we live in. I attempt paradox: through a certain beauty, to see the truly ugly. The paradox explosively confronts traditions of the pretty, decorative, and pure. Its language includes the invention of paper laminates, layered newspaper with rice paste and a finishing plaster, so that the organic contrasts with geometric forms---all a single neutral color. Its process of spontaneity and discarding the traditional armature are significant to its meaning and values which include freedom, humor, the grotesque, and spiritual.

The following descriptions indicate how the art comes from my lived experiences and are a metaphor for ideas, primal characters, and events:

Archaic Man, New Man is a life-sized, standing figure facing forward to the necessity for conceiving history on a new legal basis---the global Rights of Man. He has incorporated opposites, incompatibles, and stands in stillness with a vision that spans prehistory toward one world of mankind.

The Others. These sculptures in mask-like forms represent parts of populations thought to be unlike and inferior to the majority social group, those expelled from humanity who become potential or actual

scapegoats. In these sculptures, the Others are not a uniform mass, but highly individuated and un-idealized. They invite the viewer to draw near and inhabit their space with empathy, to see the raffish, disarming characters as ourselves, and thus to enter a vision of transfigured social consciousness.

Death Shrine was inspired by the cult of Sante Muerte, associated in Mexico with healing and protection. The sculpture conjoins a long folk tradition of ancient wisdom that confronts the topic of death in ways untypical to our culture, such as looking at it directly and as a teaching. In another vein, it suggests looking at our ability for demonic destruction in the human repertoire, activities that worship death and destruction.

Erased. Contrary to classical marble busts of historical political figures, this equally partial figure of head and shoulders points toward someone unknown, unseen, unnamed, its pathos echoed by the commonplace materials of cloth, cardboard, and thin plaster. Its eyes are holes of measureless depth, while its face is reduced to an abstract set of box shapes.

Forest Spirit on War Pedestal. The primeval horned head, its angle leaning back, is simple in shape while its surface is encrusted with a brown, ashy, earth-like roughness. Representing a long tradition of spirit protectors, it sits on a violently contrasting pedestal replete with contemporary photos of war and surveillance, the contrast a measure of the fractures and crisis in contemporary life.

The Calamity. A full figure stands sentinel-like, subjected to violent, perhaps military, injury. Its surfaces and shapes hold a turmoil of geometry, the soft and smooth, jagged, and crumpled---a human embedded in world of chaos and destruction.

Witness is a wall-mounted mask using paper laminates, plaster, and cardboard. Its vision leaps out into space to take in the truth of what it beholds, a truth which folds back into itself as the crushing weight of a world in crisis.