

mezzanine

espace d'inspiration et d'évasion

Kassandra Thatcher's new studio in Bushwick has only a small window overlooking a courtyard. A chiaroscuro conducive to the creation of lamps and sculptures with pronounced curves and a veiled grain, most often white. At barely 25, the poet transformed into a self-taught artist has a flexible gesture, and masters form with grace.

You studied poetry. What path did you take to sculpture?

Yes, I have a baccalaureate in poetry. My mentor always stressed the importance of form in writing. He insisted that a gesture could be a thing in itself. I composed poems based on very specific observations of life and movement. I was already passionate about high school clay. I was taking an optional ceramic course, and I loved making figurines. After working at length on form to express things during my graduate studies, I moved away from figurative work to try to integrate what I had learned from language into a static gesture. In the absence of clay at my disposal at the university, I began to work with metal, paper, plaster and wood. These materials allowed me to see the shape in a new way. I was then hired in an art gallery, and I desperately needed to create behind the scenes. So I returned to clay by trying to reproduce in this material what I had learned to do in others. I worked for artist Stephen Antonson. It gave me the impetus to quit my job and dedicate myself fully to sculpture.

Your sculptures often seem to freeze a movement. Did your past as a dancer inspire their curves?

Yes, 100%! I did modern dance from 8 to 18 years old. I had never realized until recently how deeply rooted it was in my body. Learning from an early age to pay attention to how your body and that of others in space is very special. The shapes I play with when I sculpt are very similar to improvised dance figures. Harmony with the way my body moves between, beside, towards, far, under or above other bodies guides my creative gesture. I often speak of "static gestures" to describe my sculptures.

What is your creative process? Are the sketches an essential preliminary to your creation?

My creative process is quite informal. I often do sketches, but just to put scattered fragments of images seen in space or floating in my head. I am much better at working in three dimensions. I create with clay which I cut or to which I often add bits here and there by realizing that I built the work upside down, turning it over and then trying to restore balance in the other direction. Often, I try to develop a detail of the movement in the next creation. My practice involves a constant iteration of form and gesture. The downside to this method is that when my mind isn't in tune with my body, my work suffers.

Who are the artists who inspire you in your artistic approach?

Barbara Hepworth is my idol, my muse. She was one of the pioneers of direct carving, an approach where the process is an integral part of the final form. Her work was also very focused on the relationship between the things that I also explore in my creation.

You went to an artist's residence in Colorado last summer. What did this trip bring you?

This trip changed my life. I learned a lot from the sculptor Matt Wedel whose talent amazes me. He builds gigantic ceramic works, up to 3.5 tons! As I am essentially self-taught, he taught me a lot about clay, and to think big! I have actually created my largest piece to date, almost my size. I was also able to get in touch with sculpture and material outside of my usual work environment, which refocused me on my practice. I came back to the origin of things. And I remembered how much I needed to play with the material again.