

TIP TOLAND

Bio

Toland was born outside of Philadelphia and now lives in Vaughn, Washington. She received her MFA from Montana State University in 1981. Tip is a full-time studio artist and a part-time instructor in the Seattle area. In addition, she conducts workshops across the United States, Europe and the Middle East. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally. Most recently she was represented through Barry Friedman Gallery LTD. until it closed in May, 2014. At the end of that year, she had a one woman exhibition at the Portland Art Museum in their Apex gallery.

Her work is represented in both private and public collections, including Yellowstone Art Museum, Archie Bray Foundation, the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian, Kohler Art Center, Nelson Atkins Museum, The Museum of Art and Design, the Crocker Museum, the St Petersburg Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She has received numerous awards, most notably a United States Artist Award in 2014.

Statement

I have loved the figure, especially the face for as long as I can remember. All through my youth I spent hours reconfiguring the face and each feature in endless doodles, never tiring of the possibilities.

Drawing was all I ever knew until I took a ceramics class in college which changed everything. Although I used clay primarily two dimensionally for the next 25 years, there was something very meaningful about clay and its potential for sculpture that got under my skin. In 2002 I took the leap and began to bring the bas relief figures off of the slab and see if I could realize them three dimensionally. This was more daunting than I had thought and I realized I needed to return to school to study anatomy. Slowly the figures became less frozen, more naturalized and larger.

I love the narrative and every one of the figures I make has a story. Usually I begin with small, unedited thumb nail drawings and return to view them anywhere from one week to one year after sketching them. Those figures that continue to hold my attention and call out to me, become sculpture. I begin sculpting them with a strong sense of their character, yet further into the process the figures themselves often dictate to me how I need to develop them. In this way I feel akin to a writer whose characters start to emerge on their own. This is very captivating for me. Scale, and other components of the context become clear at the drawing stage.

Overall, my concern is to realize these figures as honest and vulnerable, bringing what is overlooked, personal or uncomfortable to light. This effort is to expose our shared humanity.