



LAUREN GROSSMAN

Artist Statement

Looking back is a curious process. It can get a girl in trouble. Placed cheek-by-jowl how will 35 years of work behave? Do the polychrome ceramic figures have a compelling relationship to the knots of plumbing? I have a clear haptic memory of each object but showing them together applies an odd simultaneity to the whole endeavor—decades of art-making concerns and habits which cycle in and out of use in my work.

One of the primary throughlines in my studio practice involves rummaging about in the imagery of Judeo/Christian culture and translating archaic sources into the language of contemporary art. In the current profusion of identity politics, this material is my assumed heritage as a half-Jewish/half-Presbyterian woman born into a secular community. Now that the dominance of Western visual culture is eroding, I look at canonical texts and art historical precedents for imagery that might be ripe for re-examination.

The materials as well as the allusions in my sculptures have the quality of being well-worn. I like to apply a practical hardware-store aesthetic to ephemeral and slippery spiritual ideas. In my work, structures and scaffolds often stand-in for imposed organization—somewhere between church hierarchy and medical prosthetics. I aim for an awkward, ridiculous, and uncertain beauty.

Another recurring thread in my work is the physical manifestation of language—translating written word into sculptural form. Many of my objects are composed of their own descriptions. Word made flesh. The long hours invested in carving, incising, burning, stretching, casting, and stacking texts become a kind of haptic study process for me. The committed labor adds a sense of earnestness to the finished work.

The flip side of generating language is listening and absorbing speech. The ear forms recurring in some of my newest pieces allude to both the passivity of the recent isolation as well as our current condition of being assaulted by volumes of information—an endless froth of rumors, truth, hearsay, data, horror, and beauty.

Many of my pieces and installations employ do-it-yourself mechanisms to allow viewers to interact with the work and have a literal relationship to the subject matter. In other pieces, I use simple movement to animate objects. For example, "Babel Toy" invites you to play god in the narrative and give the tower a push. It wobbles, shakes, and rattles menacingly but eventually re-erects itself, ready for the story to begin again and again and again...