

Collura molds distorted, biomorphic sculptures

by Laura Lofgren
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A mangled, mutilated mess of foam and plaster is what some of her work looks like at first glance. Upon closer investigation, Bonnie Collura's sculptures form faces that scream out from behind the shellac and silicone.

Collura, a sculptor from New York, will lecture at 7 p.m. tonight in the Hultquist Center. While speaking about her own artwork, Collura will talk about a recent residency at the MacDowell Colony, the oldest artists' colony in the United States, and the project she worked on last winter and spring.

"I'll also be showing images and speaking about two upcoming projects that are going to Koblenz, Germany, for a show that's celebrating Hans Arp and his influence on biomorphic form," Collura said. Biomorph form is art that focuses on the power of natural life, with shapeless and vaguely spherical hints of the forms of biology.

The Hans Arp celebration has two different locations for Collura's work. One is in an outdoor garden and the other is on top of the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein.

"It sounds crazy, but I'll be making an outdoor sculpture that will be on the fortress," Collura said.

The fortress was built as part of a ring around Koblenz to defend against the French during the reign of the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III. Collura said she is finalizing her production plans, getting quotes for crating and shipping, and consulting with a structural engineer to make sure the internal armature of her design will withstand the winds that assault



Collura

the fortress.

Her sculpture, "Doc Pride Humility," is a biomorph form that has a lot of interior curves. The other installation, called "Death of the Virgin," was inspired by Northern European paintings Collura was looking at during that point in her artistic career.

"I made a very intricate internal mainframe that had a lot of screws that could plug in a lot of pieces," Collura said, "and because I had this really intricate core to start with, instead of making a figure upright, I'd make it completely upside down."

In Collura's art, it's not only about the transformation of the material, but also of a life and how we record that life throughout history. "Death of the Virgin" is a historical piece of art interpreted in different ways over time. Collura began flipping everything that was presented to her after first working with the character of St. Sebastian. He is commonly depicted in art and literature as being tied to a post and shot with arrows.

"I was thinking about that as being presented to me on a page, whether in text form or image form, and I flipped

it upside down," she said.

As assistant professor in the School of Visual Arts at Penn State University, Collura received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1994 and her Master of Fine Arts, concentrating in sculpture, from Yale University in 1996.

Upon graduating with her master's degree, Collura has been in numerous solo and group shows in New York, Germany, France and Italy. Her work has been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *Art Forum*, *Art in America*, *Art News*, *Sculpture Magazine*, *BOMB*, *Beautiful Decay*, *Time Out New York*, and several other publications.

Collura's sculptures interweave fantastical elements with dramatic themes. Using materials like fiberglass, resin, foam, paint and paper, Collura molds without a sense of permanent establishment.

"From the beginning, I don't say, 'I want this sculpture to end up like that,'" she said. "I don't have a strict plan."

Strange, beautiful and eerily haunting, Collura's plasticized sculptures internalize a feeling of confusion while telling a story at the same time.

"I'm proud to say I'm a sculptor because sculpture is so diverse," Collura said. "To me, one of the assets of sculpture is that traditionally, if something didn't fit in the strict category of painting or photography, sculpture would house it. So sound and installation, performance art — they all came under the rubric of what sculpture might be."