

SIKKEMA JENKINS&CO.

ARLENE SHECHET

TURN UP THE BASS

October 13 – November 12, 2016

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 13, 6-8 PM

Sikkema Jenkins & Co. is pleased to present *Turn Up the Bass*, an exhibition of new sculptures by Arlene Shechet on view from October 13, 2016 through November 12, 2016.

In *Turn Up the Bass*, Arlene Shechet continues to break new ground, presenting a generative new body of work that advances her long history of integrating object and pedestal. A master of glaze, she displays her technical virtuosity in these sculptures by using a new homemade clay to cast positive elements from the hollows of carved wood, concrete and steel. The clay undulates and circulates throughout these solid materials, as parts fit into, under and around each other. Erasing the boundary between base and sculpture, this interpenetrating process creates dynamic hybrid forms. At once structural and biological, Shechet's sculptures are infused with a vital combination of incursion, vulnerability, strength and eroticism.

In a series of low to the ground multifaceted works, loosely based on the rocks and boulders surrounding her Hudson Valley studio, Shechet embraces contradiction by taking natural forms and materials and combining them with industrial, popular culture, and architectonic references. *Peg Leg* and *Full On* use intense colors and defy gravity; the former lifts off of the ground via a pad of clay and a steel peg while the latter cantilevers off of a cushion of craggy, moss-like ceramic. *Full On* also reveals platinum-gilded drawings made by worms, while a chartreuse carpet of glaze and paint pushes through a ruptured volcanic fissure in *Face the Music*.

The artist continues to mine the psychology of transitional space. Pairings and couplings abound. These works inhabit the intermediate area between subject and object, figuration and abstraction, color and form, and humor and pathos. This is evident in the large sculpture entitled *The Body is an Ear* with its implied movement and swish of a wooden skirt. Pierced asymmetrically by a linear void -- the ear, the sex, the window, the absent plane, and the space of imagination -- *The Body is an Ear* refers in equal parts to architecture, figure, costume, and 18th century furniture, paying homage to Brancusi, Marisol, and Sophie Tauber-Arp. Visually held together by ephemeral gold leaf, this impressive construction is precariously balanced on a carved hoof and a glazed ceramic block. Bringing a refined and intensely manipulated aesthetic vocabulary into the rough-hewn and rugged composition, Shechet pushes against the serene vision of the natural world by incorporating 18th century elements fresh from her intervention at The Frick.

The title, *Turn Up the Bass*, refers not only to the intermingling of object and pedestal, but also to the harmonies Shechet reveals when she brings deeply mysterious musical tones to the foreground of her life-affirming sculptures. As the Boston Globe's Sebastian Smee, in his review of her 2015 twenty-year survey at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, has written, "It is in the harmonies and tensions...that these works cough, splutter, and sing. If they really are the great analogs to interior life that I feel them to be, it's because Shechet knows that this life, expertly attended to, has its own folds and wrinkles, its own hollows and protuberances; that it is at once...unreasonable, asymmetrical, and ultimately unknowable."

This is the influence of the bass: no longer static, in Shechet's hands it becomes an instrument of the uncanny. Her sculptures have a subconscious musical vibration: restless, undulating, and unpredictable, it is the underlying structure that weaves itself, like a flexible backbone, throughout this exhibition.

Arlene Shechet is a sculptor widely acknowledged for bringing the ceramic medium to the forefront of the art world. Her work has been exhibited extensively in the United States as well as abroad. *All at Once*, a critically-acclaimed 20-year survey of Shechet's work, was on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston in 2015, and was accompanied by a catalogue published by Delmonico/Prestel.

In recent years, Shechet's work has included a number of historical museum installations. *Porcelain, No Simple Matter: Arlene Shechet and the Arnhold Collection*, an exhibition of Meissen Porcelain chosen and installed by Shechet and including the artist's own works, is currently on view at The Frick Collection through April 2, 2017. In addition, *From Here on Now*, a solo exhibition and curatorial intervention, will be on view at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. from October 20, 2016 through May 7, 2017.

Shechet is the recipient of numerous awards including a Guggenheim Foundation Award and the 2016 CAA Artist Award for Distinguished Body of Work. Her work is in many distinguished public and private collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Walker Art Center, and National Gallery in Washington DC.