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Arlene Shechet

‘Turn Up the Bass’

*Sikkema Jenkins & Company
530 West 22nd Street, Chelsea
Through Nov. 12*

This year, Arlene Shechet staged an unprecedented intervention at the Frick Collection, for which she made work in Germany’s venerable Meissen ceramics factory to be displayed alongside a collection of antique china from the same place.

But that will be up until next spring. What you should see first is “Turn Up the Bass” at Sikkema Jenkins. For her entertainingly inventive if not quite next-level show, this New York-born sculptor used wood collected from around her Woodstock studio and a special clay she developed that barely shrinks when fired.

The wood is hewed into rough, chunky blocks, sometimes painted, sometimes not. The clay is impressed against these blocks or else modeled into shims, wedges, tubes or vaguely internal-organ-like sacs before being stippled with welts of white or yellow glaze. Using these off-kilter constituent parts, Ms. Shechet has constructed what amount to 18 diagrams of cognitive dissonance — or of just how complicated the world is.

“All in All,” for example, a 5-foot-tall stack of wood and clay pieces, is like a small monument to the fear of falling down. From one side extends a long clay tube, like Mr. Magoo’s cane; and on the topmost block, just close enough to the edge to make you nervous, sits another small cylinder of mottled clay, this one about the size of a pencil case. The whole thing seems about to fall over in every direction, but it’s not going anywhere.

WILL HEINRICH



“All in All” (2016) by Arlene Shechet, part of her show “Turn Up the Bass” at Sikkema Jenkins & Company.

Arlene Shechet; Phoebe d’Heurle, Sikkema Jenkins & Company, New York