



アナザーエナジー：挑戦しつづける力——世界の女性アーティスト16人

Another Energy: Power to Continue Challenging — 16 Women Artists from around the World





アンダーカバー2
Undercover 2
2020



アンダーカバー2(部分)
Undercover 2 (detail)
2020





無題：アンダーカバー；2019*
untitled: undercover; 2019
2020

ピアノのための物体*
Objects for a piano
1994

Phyllida Barlow—Ephemeral Confrontations

Elizabeth Fullerton

in with the
9, 2020.

Phyllida Barlow's sculpture is an art of opposites. Clumsiness and fragility coexist in her work alongside restraint and expansion, artifice and authenticity, mass and weightlessness, safety and danger, the strange and familiar. Straight polarities do not always work, however. Her sculpture is bold but not know-it-all. Never pompous, yet is it humble? Her building materials may be quotidian but her often epic-scale installations refuse to be politely contained within the places where they are shown. Her rickety structures totter Jack-in-the-Beanstalk-like vertiginously upwards or sprawl horizontally to the absolute limits of a given space.

It is perhaps this sense of precariousness that makes them so relatable, so humane. Barlow's sculptures, large and small, are lopsided and misshapen, revealing their armatures and layers of process, endearing in their fallibility. They have the grit of survivors. Top-heavy forms lurch on spindly elongated legs like overweight ballerinas; boulder-like objects perch on the edge of stacked blocks, poised to roll off. In the past decade Barlow has become renowned for creating immense theatrical environments—it's no surprise that she's a tremendous fan of Richard Wagner's (1813–1883) *The Ring Cycle* (1874). Her enthralling worlds draw viewers into a physical, sensory adventure in which they continually vie for space in a passive-aggressive negotiation with objects that must be ducked under or stepped around. The objects dangle, split, spill out and collapse in a dynamic chaos that belies their static nature. "She has got an understanding and an ability to have a relationship with space that [...] puts her in a different category to other sculptors," according to Edith Devaney, who curated Barlow's 2019 exhibition *cul-de-sac* at London's Royal Academy of Arts.¹ As its name suggests, that

show led visitors through a suite of rooms to a dead end, then compelled them to walk back through the exhibition for a second, alternative view to exit.

This emphasis on seeing the work from different perspectives is fundamental to Barlow. We see it in her site-specific installation for the Mori Art Museum, *Undercover 2* (2020) [pp. 10–13], comprising a vast five-meter high canopy that can be walked around or peered underneath from its outer brim, though never glimpsed in its entirety. Inherent in the work is a tension between revealing and concealing. Resembling some kind of exotic arachnid or floating jellyfish, the undulating carapace of vibrant orange and pink calico sheets fills the gallery space and is propped up on thin timber and steel stilts. Nestled within its folds are hulking egg-like baubles, some visible, some hidden, painted with spray paint and cement. Like most of her titles, "Undercover" is ambivalent, conveying a literal position beneath a covering as well as a notion of something surreptitious and possibly sinister—bright colors tend to signify danger in nature, after all.

Like many of the sixteen women artists in *Another Energy*, Barlow has enjoyed international recognition belatedly, having been overlooked due to her gender. Neither overtly feminist, nor addressing "feminine" (or other) themes, her work nonetheless implicitly challenges gender stereotypes. Unlike many male counterparts, Barlow has eschewed grandiose statements in bronze, Corten steel and marble. Her large-scale installations composed of throwaway materials are almost too cumbersome to be commercial. "I think weirdly there's a lack of trust of female artists who make big work," she told me. "There is a sort of expectation of the female as being something delicate and

very beautiful. There's something purposefully defiant about not aligning oneself with that." ²

Barlow has never stopped making art throughout her life, even if shows were sometimes sporadic. First and foremost she was known as an influential teacher to younger generation artists. After retiring from teaching in 2009, a series of happy circumstances culminated in a show at London's Serpentine Gallery in 2010, which gave her career a second wind. Her visibility increased dramatically after she joined the roster of a major gallery in 2010 and a flurry of international museum shows ensued, along with an invitation to represent Britain at the 2017 Venice Biennale. Barlow was suddenly in a position to unleash her audacious creations on a breathtaking scale.

Her debut Hauser & Wirth exhibition in 2011 at the gallery's former London premises in a bank designed by Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944) announced this ambition. Titled *RIG*, the show amounted to a full-scale takeover of the building, from basement to attic, with beguiling vistas unfolding from every angle. Imposing totems with block heads wrapped in colorful fabric invaded the wood-paneled ballroom; in the bowels of the building, small airless rooms were crammed with hefty tilting cylinders and a stage packed with chairs for a performance in which the viewer was the protagonist; a corridor was blocked by a hostile huddle of radiator-like shapes. Eventually a labyrinthine route wound up to the rafters where gigantic multicolored pompoms dangled, offering a euphoric release.

The preoccupation with creating environments dates back to Barlow's childhood. Born in 1944 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in northern England, she grew up in postwar London, where she had a much-loved dolls house that offered myriad possibilities for improvisation. In that era of scarcity when households were urged to "make do and mend," her mother taught her to make chairs from conkers, matchboxes became beds and earth, leaves and stones formed a garden. With her father she visited the bomb-ravaged East End, whose inside-out buildings and heaps of rubble left a powerful impression. She attended Chelsea School of Art from 1960 to 1963 to study painting and was soon directed

to a sculpture class because of the physical way she applied paint. Under the sculptors Elisabeth Frink (1930–1993) and Robert Clatworthy (1928–2015), the students were encouraged to explore materials through hitting and cutting and not to see the image as the prime resource; models were used as a prompt to think about upright and reclining forms rather than something to be faithfully copied. "It was a big mental as well as creative leap in terms of thinking of the object that you are making as something that would displace an original experience," she says, "and I think that's stayed with me for life."

From 1963 to 1966 Barlow studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, where traditional processes such as carving, casting, welding, and construction were foregrounded. After a brief flirtation with polished surfaces and geometric forms, Barlow rebelled against her training, becoming more interested in the patinations of fillers and the materials needed to get rid of blemishes: "It started this new relationship with the revealing of the layers of processes that making sculpture can involve and the idea of the unfinished, what that is."

The male-dominated British sculpture scene of the late 1960s and 1970s was stultifying to Barlow, with its moralizing, academic approach, although there were of course notable exceptions. In contrast, exhilarating rumors filtered through of radical innovations in America and Europe. ³ Robert Smithson (1938–1973) was making extraordinary incursions into the landscape with diggers, Gordon Matta Clark (1943–1978) gashed open a warehouse in New York, Walter de Maria (1935–2013) filled a room with earth. The art historian Rosalind Krauss (1941–) wrote extensively about this new "sculpture in the expanded field," which transcended the boundaries of architecture and environment, demanding an investment of time by the viewer and to be physically experienced. ⁴ Artists such as Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010) and Eva Hesse (1936–1970), meanwhile, were dispensing with labor-intensive techniques in favor of quick, gestural making, employing unconventional materials such as latex and resin. Both found ways to marry some strategies of minimalism with more expressive, sensual approaches, an accommodation that Barlow has

² | Unless otherwise stated all citations are taken from conversations with Phyllida Barlow between November 2019 and June 3, 2020. This quotation was published in author's profile of Barlow for *Elephant magazine* 44 (2020)

³ | "Hearsay, Rumours, Besit Dreamers and Art Begin Today," reproduced in Mark Godfrey, Jon Wood, and Phyllida Barlow, *Objects for and Other Things* (London: Dog Publishing, 2004), 210–2

⁴ | Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (1979): 30–44.

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⁴ | Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (1979): 30–44.

| Frances Morris, *Phyllida Barlow: Sculpture, 1963–2015*, Fiona Bradley, exh.cat. in: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 15), 57. Exhibition: *set*, The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, 15.

| Eva Hesse, cited in Cindy Mosser, "A Conversation with a Hesse" (1970), in *Eva Hesse*, Mignon Nixon (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002), 9.

| Phyllida Barlow, "For No Reason," November 5, 2014, William Townsend Lecture, The School of Fine Art, Edinburgh, video recording.

| "Phyllida Barlow in Conversation with John Yau," *Phyllida Barlow*, October 2011.

| Morris, *Phyllida Barlow*, 64.

| Conversation with the author, June 4, 2020.

| Marcel Proust, *Swann's Party*, trans. C. K. Scott-Clifford (London: Chatto, 1929; New York: Random House, 1928),

60–61. In Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1977), 289, Krauss makes an interesting analogy between Proust's madeleine incident and the modes of cognition demanded by the expanded field sculpture of artists such as Smithson, Richard Serra (1938–), and Robert Morris (1931–2018), which "asks us to experience the present in the way that Proust finds the past": through the sensory response to objects encountered by chance in an attitude of humility.

also put to use.⁵ As Hesse said, "... I was always aware that I could combine order and chaos, string and mass, huge and small. I would try to find the most absurd opposites or extreme opposites and I was always aware of their contradictions formally. It was always more interesting than making something right size, right proportion."⁶

"Wrongness" is equally a source of fascination for Barlow, particularly with things that break, collapse and need mending.⁷ If a work is not coming together, she is liable to hurl it onto the floor to resolve the impasse. Barlow's name may have become synonymous with colossal environments, but she remains an old school studio sculptor who relishes the handling of material. Her small-scale sculptures and her drawings, which she does constantly, often as a means of taking stock, drive the larger projects. The smaller works tend to fall into two camps. There are the more architectural sculptures that begin with a clear image, to which surface is added as a process of questioning. "It's an almost animal-like ownership of the thing. I need to have dirtied it in order for it to become mine," Barlow explains. The other works are more organic, even elemental, and the "dirtying process" happens from the start; the challenge is to finish and endow the object with a presence. She works quickly, ready to destroy and remake, comfortable with uncertainty about the result.

Nowadays Barlow is more appreciative of the traditional processes she learned at art school but when she was finding her own language, the discovery that waste materials could be built up, crushed and pushed like clay without the heaviness was "an epiphany."⁸ Her repertoire includes: trash bags, polythene, paper, masking tape, scrim, cement, plywood, and foam rubber. The sculptor has always attributed her choice to expediency but as Tate Modern director Frances Morris notes, these are not just "any old materials": "They are materials which have no structural integrity but which are tensile and can protect, insulate and fix (things) when put under stress."⁹ Barlow effects a kind of alchemy in the way she uses these mundane materials to construct chimerical wonderlands which are then dismantled and repurposed, being too unwieldy to store. "There is that sense that these materials are not long out of the skip. They've

come into the gallery for a while and you've encountered them at a moment when you're helping to make them something meaningful and magical and then they're going to be material again," says Fiona Bradley, director of the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh.¹⁰ In 2015, Barlow transformed the gallery with her exhibition *set* to give the impression that the upstairs space had been violently shaken into the downstairs one, partly inspired by real-life cases of houses being turned upside down by Hurricane Katrina. Splashes of intense color add further drama: often a neutral palette of grays, whites, and browns is juxtaposed with swathes of red, orange, and pink, in fabric or messily daubed pigment or even colorful masking tape.

Barlow's sculptures prompt a tip-of-the-tongue sense of recognition. Based on her observations of everyday objects like bollards, hoardings, or traffic signs, they are distorted by repetition and the action of her memory and imagination. So a water tower might take on qualities of being dangerous-looking or architectural. "Having been just an ephemeral observation maybe on the A1 [road] going north it then becomes extremely real but utterly dispossessed of all its original functions . . . a kind of phantom of the original object," according to Barlow. I am reminded of the famous "madeleine" episode in Marcel Proust's (1871–1922) 1913 novel *In Search of Lost Time*, in which the taste of the tea-soaked cake triggers an "exquisite pleasure," associated with an involuntary memory that the narrator at first struggles to identify but eventually locates in his childhood. Proust suggests that "the past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling."¹¹ Barlow's sensory sculptures trigger similarly strong associations, beyond the reach of intellect. Her spectacular 2014 show *dock 2014* at Tate Britain, for example, vividly captured the sensation of bustle and danger of the waterfront as bulky objects suspended from soaring gantry-like structures seemed poised to ram the viewer or spill their guts out.

Feelings of claustrophobia and being hemmed in recur in her work. Barlow indicates there might be a metaphorical dimension too

to this physical oppressiveness, in terms of "the fear of being trapped, of being locked in, not just physically in a lift or on the tube but maybe in life, by relationships or by circumstances where things become impossible."¹² Yet the menace is never overblown, balanced as it is by a suggestion of absurdity. In her bewitching Venice Biennale show *folly* moments of potential horror—such as a wall of treacherous wedges that threatened to impale the viewer—were counterbalanced by comical touches, such as an ungainly Romeo-and-Juliet balcony made from what looked like puffy insulation and the irreverent arrangement of giant lollipop forms at the entrance to Britain's Neoclassical pavilion.

In the face of countervailing artistic trends, Barlow has persevered on her unorthodox path. In the 1990s, perhaps feeling passed over in favor of a brash new generation of British conceptual artists, she made a series of sculptures that she inserted anonymously into the urban landscape and gave to friends. Titled *Objects for . . .*, these sculptures weren't actually *for* anything but gloried in their futility. One comprised a pair of plaster bunny ears atop a TV set, another an oversized brown paper package tied onto a piano. As a hands-on maker Barlow felt like part of a tribe facing extinction in those wilderness years when what she calls "made-easy" works were in vogue.¹³ Being out of the limelight, however, afforded freedom to make mistakes and develop her voice, now one of the most distinctive in sculpture. At the same time, she raised five children with her partner, the artist and poet Fabian Peake (1942–), no mean feat in the family-unfriendly art world. Whoever meets Barlow cannot fail to be struck by her ebullient energy and passion for what she does. "I love sculpture," she says. "This is what I've always wanted to be and whether I am or not I've no idea but who cares. That's my obsession about bringing into the world things that are useless, surplus to requirement but part of human imagination and take up space in this awkward way."

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