

Decor Maine

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LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN MAINE

The Art Issue

WHERE *the* ARTISTS RETREAT:

A MOODY SLICE OF
EUROPEAN
ELEGANCE
in a Cape Neddick home

AN ART COLLECTION
with a view on the
BLUE HILL PENINSULA

An Abandoned 1700s Home
IN PHIPPSBURG
IS TRANSFORMED



Plus!

The Visionary Behind
**ANDREW
WYETH'S WORLD**
TAKES CENTER STAGE

17 MAINE ART
GALLERIES:
Your Summer of
Inspiration Awaits

Body of Work.

Bianca Beck's sculptures interact with the landscape, part of *New England Now: Strange Stories* at the Shelburne Museum, Vermont. Photo by **ANDY DUBACK**



The Art of

Bianca Beck

by **ALLISON PAIGE**

Known for their vibrantly painted sculptures and expressive paintings on wood, Portland-based artist Bianca Beck is wildly accomplished in both mediums. Using the human figure as inspiration, they move beyond mere representation while preserving gestural energy, creating works that complement each other and even seem to collide.

"The human form is always in transformation, moving, aging, growing, shrinking, shedding skin, and changing," says Bianca. "As the site of all experience, our bodies hold our own histories, as well as that of each other."

Their outsized sculptures, comprised of wire and papier-mâché or fiberglass, feel nearly sentient, muscular, colorful hulks that seem poised to sway or bend or dance, while their frenetic paintings often teem with eyes, fringed lashes fanning in all directions, suggesting a multiplicity of bodies and selves, unbound by physics. Collectively, the works share an almost Day-Glo coloration, a kinship of energetic hues that creates cohesion and continuity.

"I've never seen a separation between mediums," Bianca explains. "I think the words painting and sculpture, as they are formally defined, are interchangeable. I would say that I flip the associated ways of working in those mediums onto the other.

So, in "sculpture" I'm thinking about color, line, composition, and in "painting" I'm thinking in quote-unquote "sculptural" ways, carving out space (sometimes literally carving out space by using wood carving tools on my wood panels, digging out the panel or scraping off the paint), building, and creating dimensionality. In my current work, the sculptures function as an amplification and confrontation of experience. I've always thought of these sculptures as portraits, not in the traditional manner that captures a singular pose, but rather as portraits that show transformation and multiplicity. All points of time at once."

Exploring dynamic themes from protest to procreation, Bianca stretches and subverts the raw materials of their mediums to constantly surprise the viewer. "Scale plays a huge role; the relationship of the viewer's body to the size, mass, and power of a monumentally scaled work provokes a physical reckoning. The layering of biomorphic shapes and use of fluorescent and discordant color schemes

physically jars the viewer into alertness and awareness. I am a queer nonbinary person, and I think there is a parallel to the way I relate to identity, my own sense of self, and materials and mediums. I feel it is essential and urgent to dissolve boundaries, binaries, and categories and embrace complexity. We contain fluidity, complexity, and resilience. We contain all of this in every moment of our lives." ■

Bianca Beck is represented by the Uffner & Liu gallery in New York City. Their first solo exhibition in Maine opened this summer at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art in Rockland.



LEFT: Bianca notes: "The relationship of the viewer's body to a monumentally scaled work provokes a physical reckoning." **BOTTOM, LEFT & TOP, RIGHT:** "These works are not static representations," Bianca says. "They are in the act of becoming." **BOTTOM, OPPOSITE:** Bianca's vibrant figures explore myth, transformation, and the multiplicity of selves.



Bianca's newest work, included in CMCA's solo show this summer, has an airy, filigree quality to the structures.



"I've always thought of these sculptures as portraits that show transformation and multiplicity." Papier-mâché, wood, steel wire, acrylic, and oil, 118 x 75 x 10 inches.