

## Rebecca Warren

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Left: **Rebecca Warren, *The Main Feeling*, 2009**, handpainted bronze on painted MDF plinth, 114 x 30 x 28 1/2". Plinth: 64 x 26 3/8 x 26 3/8". Right: **Rebecca Warren, *Mord*, 2002**, handpainted reinforced clay on MDF plinth, 7 1/2 x 15 3/4 x 8 1/4". Plinth: 43 1/4 x 29 1/8 x 29 1/8".

*The London-based artist Rebecca Warren is well known for her clay and bronze sculptures, which have previously referenced the "masterful" output of a range of artists, including Auguste Rodin, Edgar Degas, Willem de Kooning, and cartoonist Robert Crumb. A pair of solo shows featuring her new works at the Renaissance Society and three monumental bronzes commissioned by the Art Institute of Chicago open on October 3.*

**THE BRONZES THAT WILL BE EXHIBITED** at the Art Institute were first made in clay, the same size as you see them in bronze. That is, the bronzes weren't made as maquettes to be scaled up later for casting. Instead, they are casts of things sculpted by hand to an immediate, real scale. This has a subtle influence on what you are looking at: It was always big, slabby, twisted, built up with wet malleable material under gravity, and that's what has been fixed in bronze. The heights of the "plinth" part of the sculptures were, in part, determined by the heights of the glass parapets. I wanted the sculptures to peek over the lower parapet but to be shorter than the highest parapet. That way they serve as the binding force for the differing heights. Since they're higher than one of the parapets, they also exceed, but just by a bit, the limit of that roof. It also means the feet of the sculptures are around face height. They are awkward to look at, or to look up at, so you have to make that bit of effort, bending your neck, adjusting your eyes to the sky.

The sculptures are also visible from vantage points outside the terrace. They act as a response to Chicago's famous modernist architecture, inasmuch as they evoke maximalism or the extra-rational. But the sculptures face inward toward each other, giving themselves a solidarity separate from any context. It is this triangulation of their own dynamic that allows them to not necessarily have to adapt or assimilate to the city. And yet the surfaces are not harsh or reflective, so the sculptures can still roll with the city, with anything.

For the show at the Renaissance Society, I have made mainly new work—a combination of pieces in clay, steel, and bronze. I wanted areas of intense color concentration in the space. They are, in a way, an extension of similar, earlier sculptures that were smoother and sweeter. These new ones are uglier and more awkward, like chewed-up Meissen ware. For the earlier pieces, I had thought of Otto Dix and depictions of Weimar corruption and excess. For these, I kept thinking of an imagined modern Weimar—like *The Hills*. There's also a backward sequencing for a few of the sculptures. *The Other Brother 2* and *A Culture* look like family, with one seeming older, rustier, and more provisional than the other, although the one that appears to be the original was, in fact, made later and perversely is covered with a Perspex case. I have also made four steel sculptures. I like that the size of one of them was partly determined by the size of the lift—I had to reduce it by a couple of inches at an advanced stage of its development, so in a way the lift restriction became a deciding aesthetic factor.

The Renaissance Society is a bit baroque, which helped me to develop an idea of what could work in there. Similar to "Feelings" at Matthew Marks Gallery and my Serpentine exhibition last year, I wanted this show to work a bit like a vitrine, or one of my vitrines, where the separate items energize certain elements in one another. I also wanted the arrangement to enact those preparatory states that are a hallmark of such shows: where afterward, everything gets dispersed or housed in splinter groups. In this show, I wanted the viewer to see the moment when the relationships between the physical objects become like the relationships between the ideas being worked on. You can see families of memes and motifs in the work. The various materials start off contrasting along gender lines—in their qualities of durability, brittleness, rectilinearity, and crumbliness. But these qualities are never stable for long, and they start to invade one another in ways that I find interesting.

— As told to Lauren O'Neill-Butler