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ART

Arlene Shechet Has a First Museum Retrospective in Boston



Arlene Shechet's works are on view in Boston through Sept. 7. Alan Wiener, via Arlene Shechet/Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

By **Holland Cotter**

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In the early 1990s, when a lot of New York artists were making art about gender, racial identity and the devastation of AIDS, Arlene Shechet was producing work that looked like no other: hand-molded plaster sculptures of seated Buddhas. Rough-textured, splashed with color, her art was very much a meditation on change and loss, but added an extra element: a sense of emotional resolution.

Several of those sweet, funky figures appear early in “Arlene Shechet: All at Once,” at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston (through Sept. 7), the artist’s first museum retrospective. And they introduce the extraordinarily varied yet logical trajectory of a career that has encompassed both more or less traditional ceramic pots and wildly experimental abstract forms: amoebalike, intestinal, spiky, sexual, historically referential and often displayed on fantastically inventive pedestals.

Taken together, this is some of the most imaginative American sculpture of the past 20 years, and some of the most radically personal. (icaboston.org)