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ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS

Review: Arlene Shechet's new sculptures are engrossing and crazy fresh



Arlene Shechet. "Origins." 2019. Bronze and steel, 12.5 inches by 11.5 inches by 10.5 inches. (Phoebe d'Heurie)

By LEAH OLLMAN

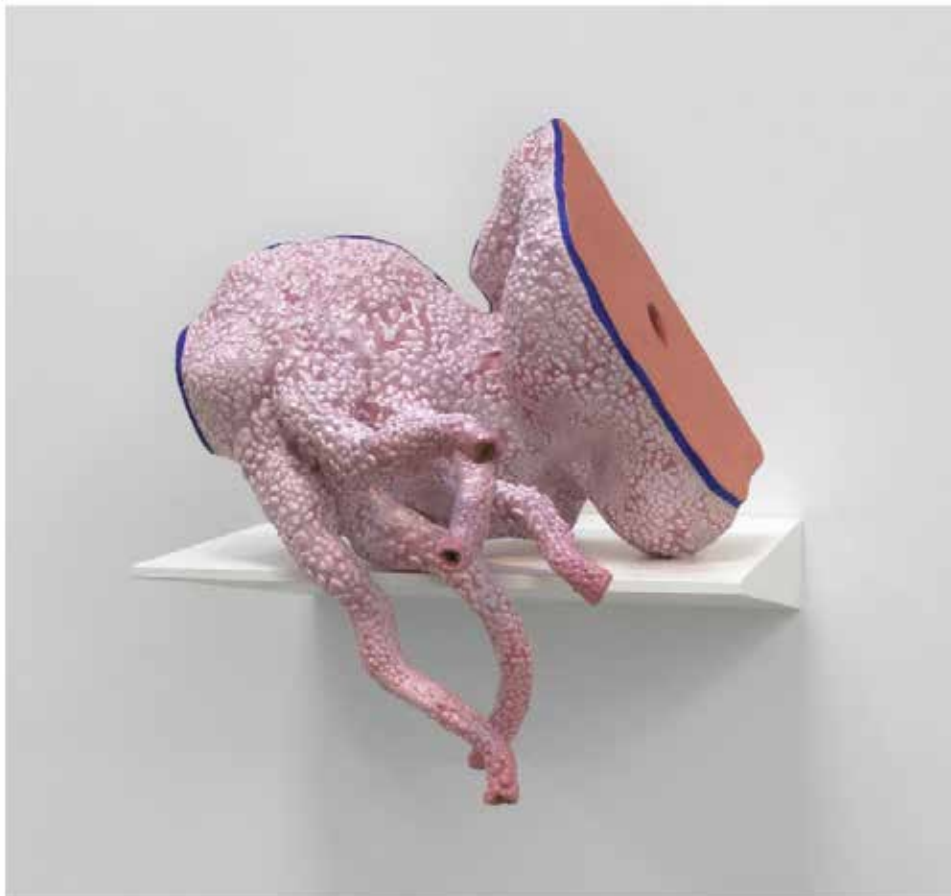
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Arlene Shechet's 17 recent sculptures at Susanne Vielmetter's new downtown L.A. gallery make for an absolute jawbreaker of a show: deliciously unwieldy, a slow release of intense, kaleidoscopic flavor.

Shechet, based in New York state, works in clay, wood, bronze, steel, concrete, resin, paint and more to make pieces that are rigorous and unabashed, acutely intelligent and sensually exuberant.

Funny, too. Consider "Origins," a bronze protruding from a steel peg in the wall. The piece is lumpy as a russet potato, with a skin like crumpled paper. A little tubular orifice sticks out of one side. Tendril? Air vent? Mouthpiece for this bladder-like instrument? "Origins" is among the humblest works in the show in scale and material, but like others larger and more complex, it gives the body addressing it a juicy jolt.

Shechet's work is as physically immediate as it is art historically resonant. She parses sculptural conventions of finish and presentation, often staging charged conversations between an object and the structural base supporting it. She borrows methods and materials from the realm of architectural construction, casting concrete, positioning lengths of I-beam and stacking bricks. And she willfully inherits techniques from a more decorative tradition, garnishing forms with silver and gold leaf. In her sculptures, architectural order meets a sort of bodily disorder; the points of contact are concentrated, contradictory, engrossing.



Arlene Shechet, "Show Off," 2018. Glazed ceramic, resin, paint, wood, 13 inches by 13 inches by 10 inches. (Robert Wedemeyer)

"Show Off" pays homage to [Ken Price](#) in its queasy beauty. It's a curious ceramic confab of smooth, terracotta planes and a leprous soft mass, rosy as an internal organ, and sprouting puckered tentacles.

"The Queen," a slender, slightly dented shaft of cast concrete crowned with scalloped-edged bronze, winks at Brancusi, and the craggy pink pillar rising out of the center of "Fictional Exchange" brings to mind Claes Oldenburg's melting Good Humor bar.



Arlene Schechet, "Fictional Exchange," 2019. Glazed ceramic, glazed firebrick, steel 61 inches by 18 inches by 18 inches. (Phoebe d'Heurie)

Shechet's work is generous with tribute and wide-ranging in association. A spirit of assemblage prevails, on both material and stylistic levels. One moment, Shechet tussles affectionately with the ghost of [Peter Voulkos](#) ("Matter of Time"), and in another, makes play with Brutalist architecture ("Twins"). She organizes and reorganizes possibility; every iteration she produces is crazy fresh.

It's been a long decade since Shechet's last solo show in L.A. Savor this one. Savor its tang, piquancy and sweetness, its friction and its hearty, infectious enthusiasm.

Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, 1700 S. Santa Fe Ave. No. 101, L.A. Tuesdays-Saturdays, through June 8. (213) 623-3280, www.vielmetter.com



Ariene Shechet. "Matter of Time," 2019. Glazed hard brick, cast bronze, steel, 55 inches by 22.75 inches by 18 inches. (Robert Wedemeyer)