

ALESSANDRA TORRES

ARTIST STATEMENT

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We understand everything with our bodies, mainly through touch and sight. Unusual experiences early in life have caused me to be acutely aware of my physical experience of the world. At birth I was placed in an incubator, blindfolded and naked, denied the use of sight - forcing me to understand the world through physical sensation. My childhood in Puerto Rico, allowed me an unrestricted physical exploration of the world; I ran around naked year-round, mimicking the local means of communication using exaggerated hand gestures and body language, always dancing to the ever-present multi-layered beats and rhythms of the island's music. Home was also a place where I did not physically resemble the native population, an experience that made me hyper aware of my physical appearance in relation to my surroundings.

My body is the starting point for all of my work: I explore the body's ability to function as a mark-making tool; its ability to communicate thoughts and emotions through gesture, movement, and body language; the body as form; and I play with the malleable nature of physical identity transforming the figure into characters in made-up stories. I allow myself to be directed by my physical impulses; I have an insatiable need to fit into small spaces. When presented with a foreign landscape I immediately need to make myself a part of it: my reclining body becomes a mountain in the landscape, a thirty-foot long braid of blonde grass connects my body to the sandy dunes, an oversize powder-puff becomes the tool I use to make it appear as though I created the snowfall on a hillside. Photography captures these moments of transformation and connection - when the body merges with its surroundings, the moment when a dance or movement becomes a drawing, the magical instant when the figure becomes a character in a fairytale.

My installations combine sculptural elements, with the body, in order to create new histories; new fairytales that make visible the memories and secrets contained within foreign spaces. My sculptures are made using materials with a life span: steel, porcelain, glass, wood, and fiber all possess the strength and vulnerability of the human body; they all corrode and change over time retaining and displaying their own personal histories.

As I begin to feel more at one with my own body, my focus shifts from my interaction with objects/ places/others to calling attention to the viewers' body; giving the viewer the opportunity to interact with the artwork encouraging them to learn and create new memories through direct physical experience. I want my artwork to make the viewer aware of their presence in space, to challenge and modify their movement, and to encourage the use of the body as a means of communication and connection.