

Polymorphic Polka
Sculpture by Leslie Fry

I first encountered Leslie's work as a young college graduate who had just moved to Vermont. It was there I encountered one of her objects – a dress, or at least something that signified a dress, made in a way and of materials that were completely foreign to me. The object evoked both strength and fragility, hope, and also menace. I wasn't particularly engaged with art at that point in my life, nor was I yet an object maker. Despite this, the object, the dress, stayed with me.

I view Leslie's practice as aligned to surrealism; drawing inspiration from mysticism, ancient cultures, the natural world, and the absurdities/horrors of the human condition. Her use of the quotidian, including architectural forms and organic elements conjure a kind of dreamscape inhabited by a species unknown to us. These hybrid forms seem ready to liberate themselves and summon the viewer to join with them in their journey rising above our daily rituals and travails.

The surrealist's aspiration towards the liberation of the mind as well as the liberation of artistic expression also meant seeking political freedom, and in many instances, political activism. Leslie has described her sculptures as illustrative of the female condition but I think that doesn't go far enough for I see them as inherently political statements regarding our need for resourcefulness and alternative modes to address the complexities present in our world. Given the current political climate, in which basic human rights are under attack and human dignity is assailed on a daily basis, Leslie's formal inventiveness and potent imagery move us to question our relationship to each other, our relationship to the natural world and our beliefs regarding gender roles and identity. Her work serves as a bulwark against the current political tide of fear and oppression we currently find ourselves in and offer a glimmer of hope for what could lie ahead.

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Ridgewood, Queens
May 2024