

NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

Polly Borland

BOD

Marfa Invitational Foundation | MONUMENTS

May 2023 – May 2024

135 Golf Course Rd, Marfa, TX 79843

Polly Borland's monumental sculpture, *BOD* (2023), will be included as part of this year's Marfa Invitational's "MONUMENTS" section in the dry grassland of the Michael Phelan Foundation. The world-renowned photographer, famous for her images of models claustrophobically wrapped in carbuncled cotton stuffed pantyhose, has rendered such a figure into a life-sized sculptural form. *BOD* is a cast aluminum figure taken from a live performer wrapped in Borland's same signature soft sculpture. The seemingly flesh-like or gooey abstracted figure, finished in matte automotive paint, embraces a new sculptural potential of the artist's original abstracted forms. The painstaking lost wax cast process, done with the help of a team of collaborating fabricators in Hudson Valley, speaks to Borland's continued interest in pushing the boundary of her artistic practice. Over the course of one year, the pink, towering tangle of bulbous forms, over seven feet high, will stand looming above visitors who approach it in the dusty desert.

BOD's soft and fleshy allure belies the sculpture's resolute solidity – a strange combination of heroic, steadfast metal enveloping in an undulating, almost damp, nacreous surface. Hints of the human emerge beneath tight tugs of fabric: an exposed long neck, a jutting elbow, the crook of an ankle or the soft edges of an ear, each of which reminds us of our own physicality and immediately connect us to the implicit human presence within. Echoing the photographic origins of Borland's practice, the viewer reprises the role of photographer, searching with their own lens to connect with the ghost beneath the shell as it gazes into the arid abyss.

Aside from two foot tall preparatory maquettes, the prelude to Borland's first foray into sculpture was the artist's iconic 2018 photographic series *Morph* (2018). The series serves as a dramatic, almost surrealistic expansion of Borland's visual language, with her attention to color and reimagining of form at the forefront. *Morph* captures a model against a flat colored background, enveloped in colored pantyhose material stuffed with rough cotton fluff. In conjunction with her strange postures and crumbled poses, Borland disfigures the female body to a point of grotesque abstraction. *Morph* creates divergent moods: horrific, claustrophobic imprisonment contrasted by the perceived sensation of safety marked by a sensual swaddling of the nude; the works are human and inhuman at the same time. Overall, *BOD* carries the strange gestures of *Morph* into a new realm by evolving it into a three-dimensional form.

The artist's decision to move into sculpture began with a chance meeting with future collaborator Dan Tobin, a founder of ArtMakers and the co-owner of UAP foundry. Their conversation led to the revelation that throughout her photographic practice, Borland had already been working as a sculptor without truly realizing it. In addition to *Morph*, in *NUDIE* (2021)—her nude and subversive "selfie" photographs—the artist served as her own model, manipulating her flesh in front of an iPhone lens with such surreal proximity that her own skin closely resembled sculptural material. Noticing Borland's persistent impulse to see the body as sculpture, Tobin invited the artist to multiple foundry residencies in order to explore her sculptural practice with a myriad of materials at her disposal.

With the concept of pulling the sculpture out from within the *Morph* photographs' two-dimensional plane, *BOD* begins.

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Polly Borland (b. 1959, Melbourne, AU; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA, US) has exhibited worldwide, especially in Australia, the UK, Europe and across the United States, including the major exhibition Polyverse at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne in 2018, as well as at institutions including National Portrait Gallery, London; University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane; National Portrait Gallery, Canberra; and Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane. Her work is in public and private collections including The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, National Portrait Gallery, London; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; and Damien Hirst's Murderme Collection.