

HB381

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Kristina Riska:
Hidden

November 16, 2022 - January 7, 2023
Opening Reception: November 16, 6 - 8pm

HB381 is pleased to announce *Hidden*, a solo exhibition of Kristina Riska's latest body of work. Riska (Finnish, b. 1960) is one of Scandinavia's foremost contemporary ceramic artists and has been studying, defying, and redefining the traditional tenets of the medium since the 1980s. *Hidden* is her first exhibition at HB381, and third solo show with gallery principals Juliet Burrows and Kim Hostler, who have represented Riska at Hostler Burrows for the past decade. This new group of large scale hand-built stoneware sculptures—arresting in their technical mastery—marks an important departure for the artist in her approach to color and form. There is a palpable serenity in her work—an energy that emanates from the undulating, fluid curves—at once fragile and full of power. She says of *Hidden*, “We all carry a certain private spot inside of us, a hidden place. Our thoughts, our history, our desire, who we really are: a source of life, maybe it is the soul. In this restless and relentless world, maybe more than ever, I feel the importance of finding the peace of mind to be able to survive. Working is the hidden place for me..”

Riska's process is one of intense physical engagement with the clay; she painstakingly hand coils each piece, many of which stand at nearly five feet tall. The walls of these monumental vessels are inexplicably thin, yet their delicate appearance masks a formidable structural integrity, evidencing a level of technique and skill developed over a lifetime of devoted experimentation. The intricate surface textures and thin brushstrokes of glaze are meticulously applied by hand; these slow, methodical movements are a meditation for the artist. Riska's *Beewords* series in particular takes inspiration from the way in which bees build nests by continuously reproducing a single pattern. “They have the model in their DNA and I think we as people have something similar in us. We achieve satisfaction from repeating and structuring things. This idea of growing something large from many small, like pieces is fascinating to me. There is a lot of repetition in my working process.”

Often characterized by a biomorphic quality, Riska's vessels may evoke hints of the contour of a figure or face. Over the course of her practice she has processed the memories and emotions contained within her own body through the act of making sculpture, alluding in the artwork titles to relationships, experiences, and body parts. In *Hidden*, she pushes further into this investigation, exploring entirely new forms. The *Longbluelegs* works seem to refer directly to the image of leg bones which have been fractured and carry some burden or scar tissue at the site of the fissure. Other pieces are more abstract interpretations of human heads; these are in the shape of vessels, their internal cavities holding space for the “hidden place” Riska describes. These vessels—Sei Shōnagon, Alma, Artemisia, Kleopatra—are named for notable female figures throughout history. Riska is keenly aware that women's stories are rarely recounted in their own voices, if they are remembered at all.

Kristina Riska lives and works in Helsinki, where she is a senior member of the Arabia Art Department Society. Riska is a graduate of the Department of Ceramic Art at the University of Art and Design, Finland. She has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the State of Finland's Suomi Prize in 1995; the Medaglia D'Oro in Faenza, Italy, 1995; a silver medal at the International Ceramic Contest in Mino, Japan, 2002 and an Honorary Award in 2008; and working grants from both The State of Finland and The Finnish Cultural Foundation. Riska's work has been included in numerous exhibitions worldwide and placed in many public and private collections, including the Design Museum, Helsinki; Saastamoninen Foundation, Finland; Ulster Museum, Belfast, Ireland; and the Gifu Museum, Japan, among many others.