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Standing Still

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STANDING STILL

Thesis Statement

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Claremont Graduate University 2015

Submitted in fulfillment of the Degree of
Master of Fine Arts

Rachel Lachowicz (Chair)

Anne Bray

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STANDING STILL

My work comes from a focus on attention and listening—the kind of listening that involves the entire body and all the senses at once. For this reason, I am drawn to the in-between—to movement at the corners of the eyes, to the moments between one breath and the next. When we want to catch such moments we stand still, we pause, we wait, "with bated breath." At such moments, I believe, the potential exists for taking on different perspectives and for finding other points of view. I believe that opportunities for change and exchange exist in the accumulation of small displacements and shifts of attention. The apparent solidity of the world falls away and we have to find out what things mean again.

Standing still, in a state of stillness, is an action that encapsulates many of my concerns. Coming to a standstill, stopping or freezing into a state of stasis or immobility, is not the same as stillness. Body movement is a complex play of gravity, momentum, and instability, a constant suspension between falling and not falling. In stillness, all these forces are held in dynamic tension. It is one of the most active states that we can be in, when body and senses stretch out in all directions, ready for whatever happens next.

In my work, this takes form in objects and architecture that collaborate with bodies moving inside them. The space is structured, not as a system, but as a collection of unstable parts, like a kind of precarious machine or puzzle. Standing or moving bodies become part of the spatial and sculptural conversation, as the space responds to their presence, creating a shifting network of small movements and adjustments. It is necessary for the viewer to move around to try to make sense of the whole. This creates an experience that requires searching and journeying on the part of the viewer. In this way I aim to engage the viewer in a kind of "sense-making"—a way of finding shape and meaning in the world using the whole body in movement, touch, sound, breath, vision, and feeling. This complex of senses and sensing is always with us but we are not normally mindful of it until we are displaced in some way. A circus funhouse or a theme park ride may appear similarly calibrated to agitate the senses, but not to focus attention, to create a space for noticing and being still.

I believe in the power of small things. I believe in the power of the mundane, the ordinary, the quiet, and the overlooked to create change. Perhaps this is a romanticized idea of the mundane. But in a world in which the loud holds sway, doing very little except to cause separation, isolation, and the hardening of entrenched ideologies, perhaps the small and the still can slip between, around, under, or over the walls, to connect people to people and people to the earth in different and better ways.