

# RUTH BEER



*Ruth Beer is an Associate Professor of Visual Art and Head of Sculpture at the Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Vancouver, BC, Canada. In her art practice, she uses sculpture, photography and video to question the meaning of objects and artifact collections in museums, theatres and other public spaces. Her extensive record of exhibitions includes solo exhibitions in museums and galleries in Canada, UK, USA, Japan and China. She is a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts and is a recipient of several Canada Council Visual Art Grants, public art commissions, and in 2009 she was awarded a three-year Canada SSHRC Research Creation in the Fine Arts Grant as principal investigator for research, creation and exhibition of new work in partnership with Parks Canada. She is also a co-investigator in the SSHRC funded City of Richgate Project. She is a member of the University's Board of Governors, and served on the Board of Directors of Presentation House-Gallery, and Vice-chair of the City of Vancouver Public Art Committee.*

## **Why did you decide to participate in the MAIV residency at Banff?**

Because I am interested in questions about the relationship of research and practice. It was an opportunity to discuss this with other artists.

## **Do you have a definition of artistic research?**

My definition of artistic research relies on the integration of theoretical and creative practices to answer questions. In my view, it is much more than gathering data or information, although that can be a part of research.

## **What was your notion or understanding of artistic research prior to the residency? Did that understanding or your interaction with artistic research change during the course of the experience? In what ways?**

My understanding that practice and research are integrated, interwoven practices was strengthened and confirmed. It was interesting to hear other ideas about this relationship. I believe that research can be, but is not necessarily, a preparatory step for artistic practice. I also believe that artistic practice can be a form of research.

## **ON ARTISTIC RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

### **Is artistic research something you've always defined for yourself? At what point in your creative life did defining and documenting your artistic practice or engaging in artistic research seem relevant or viable?**

It's something that for me was always in place. For many years I have been a faculty member and practicing artist in a university milieu that promotes research, so how I balance the roles of artist/researcher/teacher is something I think about a lot.

Questions about the relationship of artistic practice, research and pedagogy formed the basis of my research and doctoral dissertation in which I reframed and refined ideas about this subject.

Certainly it's been an important question in academic degree-granting institutions as it relates to an increased focus on interdisciplinarity, reflecting what is being produced in contemporary art and helps to legitimize art practice in academia by linking it with other disciplines. It also opens possibilities to expand and develop new programs.

## **Is this positive?**

Yes, it reflects the creative process of most artists — it makes the process less mysteriously opaque and more transparent.

Research includes practice; they are symbiotic, reciprocal — they are inextricably linked. Thinking about them as in this way enables more opportunity for exploration and expansion of ideas and production.

I hope that the viewer understands my work as a conversation that adds to the discourse around art and the ideas addressed in the work.

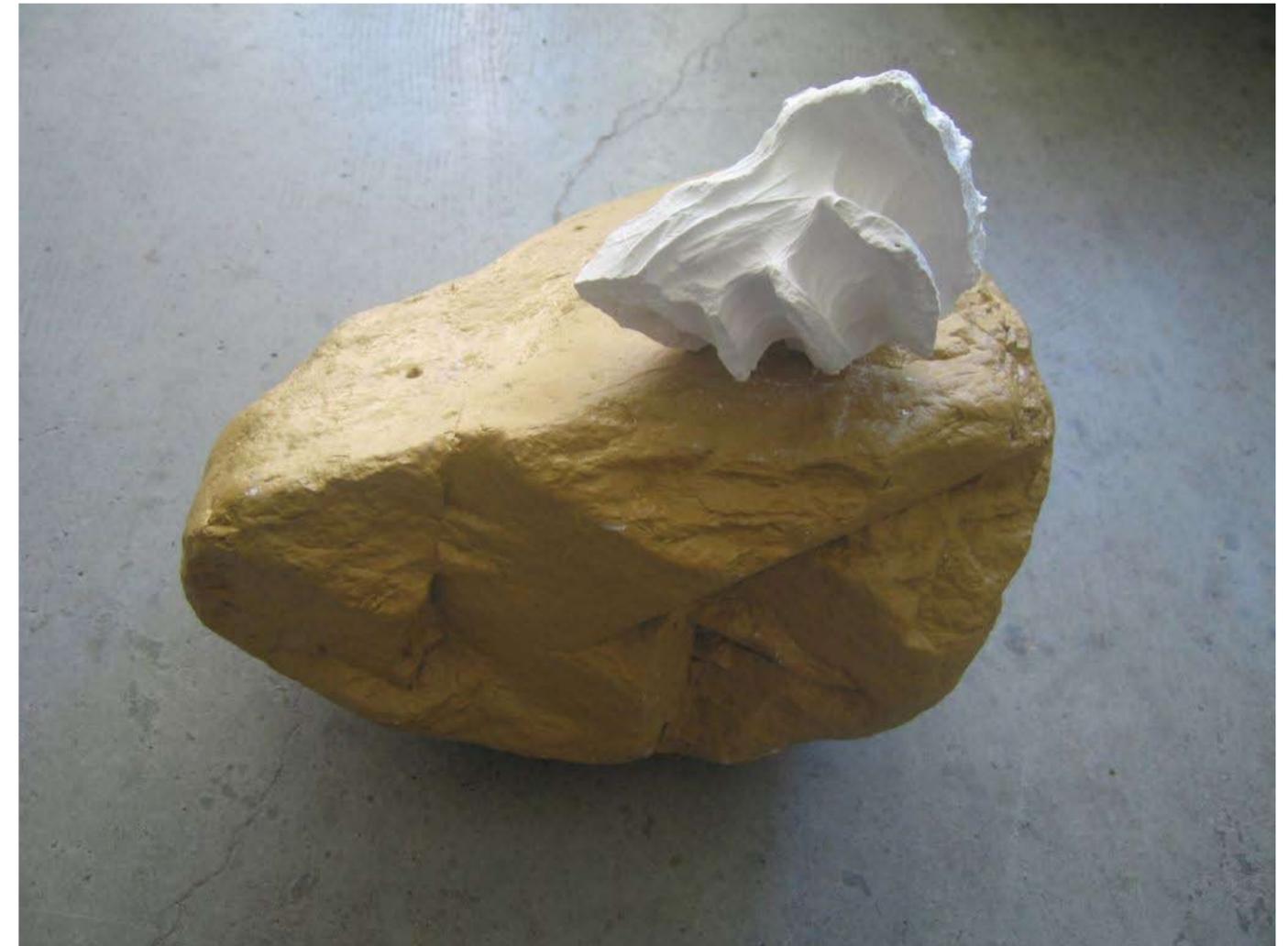
## **What are the opportunities for you as an artist if you choose to participate in artistic research?**

I think artistic research presents dynamic opportunities for creative growth, developing ideas, and making artwork.

In a practical sense, there are more opportunities for collaboration with other artists and collaborative partnerships.

## **RECONSIDERING THE MAIV RESIDENCY**

**If research, traditionally defined, promises the creation of new knowledge, what kind of knowledge**



**"Heart Head Hand" 18" x 12" x 16"**

This work was created during the MAIV Residency. It is a part of an on-going series of sculptures that positions the eye, hand, and mind in a relationship of poised tension drawing attention to the parts that make up a whole.

## **does artistic inquiry produce?**

All kinds.

## **What are the implications of making knowledge claims for artistic creation?**

It will create a stronger presence in every day life and underscore the contribution that artistic creation can make to understanding the world in which we live.

## **How does the increasing academic and institutional recognition of artistic research affect the artistic community?**

It enhances the profile of the artistic community. It's good — higher profile and potentially more support. On the other hand it institutionalizes art further so that it becomes more difficult to venture outside of the expected, or expectations of institutions. It could inhibit freedom or experimentation.

## **How does the practice of artistic research affect**

## **academic culture?**

It can enrich it and expand possibilities by opening it up to non-text-based and other kinds of practice-based initiatives and ways of learning.

## **What can non-artists and communities learn from artist-researchers—in terms of developing alternative research methodologies, attitudes, and patterns of inquiry?**

Artist-researchers using arts-based methodologies have the potential to create new knowledge by bringing meaningful perspectives to questions of cultural, political or economic significance