

Christina West
Artist Statement

My work gives me permission to stare.

We are told not to stare because the act is rude. It might make someone else, the one upon which our gaze is fixed, feel uncomfortable. So we steal glimpses, don't let our eyes linger too long, pretend not to see, and are encouraged to retreat within ourselves. But the moments when I am compelled to stare, are the moments when I feel most alive. My curiosity, awe, and questioning make me alert. The stare signals an intense engagement with a reality outside of myself.

Other people are compelling subjects and objects of contemplation because we will never be in their heads as completely as we are in our own. Despite the fact that, fundamentally, people are essentially the same, this lack of direct access to interiority makes others a perpetual mystery. It cloaks every interaction in uncertainty and ambiguity. But it is exactly that mystery, uncertainty, and ambiguity that make the inquiry worth returning to. And it is such complexity of understanding that I strive to infuse into my work.

My sculptures do not provide answers or assertions, but embrace uncertainty through the provocation of more questions. The figures are permanently frozen mid-gesture in a moment that encourages the generation of ambiguous narratives. Stripped from the context of previous actions, the figures' personalities, motives, intentions are malleable and unfixed in the viewers' minds. Who they are is in a state of flux dependent on the stories viewers create.