

In the presence....

Over the course of an accomplished career, Nancy Lovendahl has developed a compelling body of sculpture ranging from organic and vessel shaped forms, standing figure-like works, to large-scale public art projects. Aside from her large public art commissions, the majority of Lovendahl's works focus on single objects, and, harkening back to more classic techniques, are forged out of clay or carved out of marble and stone. Given how rare carving as a creative method is among contemporary sculptors, and how even more rare working with marble and stone is, Lovendahl's work stands apart in its own unique space.

Lovendahl began her artistic trajectory as a ceramic artist that began with a fascination with clay, for its rich tactility as a material—of and from the earth— and its latent potential that, in one's hands, the artist noted, could become anything.¹ That thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about interior and exterior landscapes or states of being could take form in tangible works of art became a hallmark of Lovendahl's creative efforts.

Our Place Our Refuge, 2007 (Detail)

Colorado buff sandstone, aero concrete block

40 x 30 x 11 feet

Art in Public Places

Community Park

Town of Snowmass Village, CO,



¹ Lovendahl, in email correspondence with the author, November 19, 2019.

A series of expansive ceramic wall reliefs created for public and private commissions over the course of ten years in the 1980s was the first sustained exploration of this concept. Ranging in scale up to 20 feet in length these wall reliefs, inscribed with the topography of land below from aerial perspectives, marked the artist's endeavor to not only represent but to apprehend the grandeur of the mountainous terrain and vast open spaces of the Colorado landscape.



Shift, 2012

12 ' L x 1-1/4' W x 1-1/2'-4' H

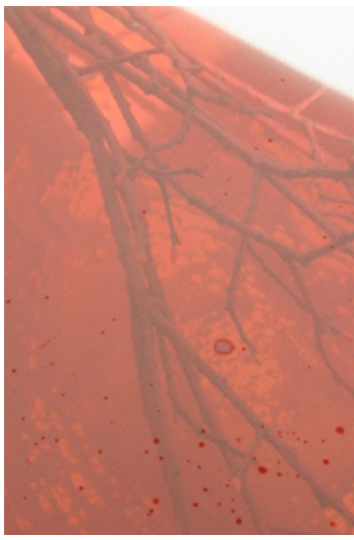
Collection of Robert & Karen Duncan

Lincoln, NE

The natural landscape, “ the contours of which ” she has remarked, “are always shifting in the light of dawn or dusk, dissolving into or morphing into primal forms,”² becomes the framework and context against which Lovendahl explores notions of perception—how we view and apprehend the world—outside and within.

In the 1990s and on into the early 2000s, Lovendahl's work evolved beyond the large-scale wall reliefs into entirely new directions. A stunning body of her sculptures, such as Deep Moab (2001) took the form of smaller, wall mounted, mixed media ceramic objects—These half-oval, vessel like shapes included wooden sticks, twigs, leaves, and copper wire on their insides, with most of them delicately sheathed and occluded by translucent chiffon scrims.

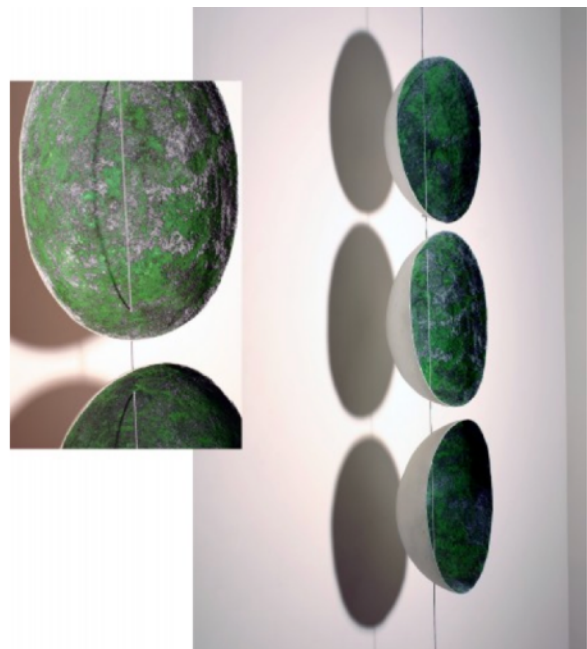
² Artist statement quoted on www.nancylovendahl.com



Deep Moab, 1998
20"L x 12"W x 8"D,
Ceramic, chiffon, wood, mixed media

Beautifully crafted, with titles such as *Gene Pool* (1995), *The Fall* (1998), and *Spring Shadows* (2001), these poignant works appear elusive, fragile, and vulnerable. Seemingly crepuscular, veiled as they are with thin membranes, these sculptures invite us to peer inwards. Alluring while simultaneously obfuscated, these arresting sculptural works shield—but also hint at tenuous interiors.

In the early 2000s, Lovendahl developed another series of sculptures in which she continued to work with oval shaped forms. The vertically suspended cast paper and ceramic ovals including *Greenwich Mean Time* (2005), a commissioned work in the collection of United States Art in Embassy Program at the American Embassy in Belize, presaged a sequence of halved ovoid or egg-shaped forms. At first made in ceramic, then marble and sandstone, some like



Greenwich Mean Time, 2005
Height variable x 15"W x 12"D Cast Paper,
stainless steel, & m/m.
Collection of The United States ART IN EMBASSY
PROGRAM

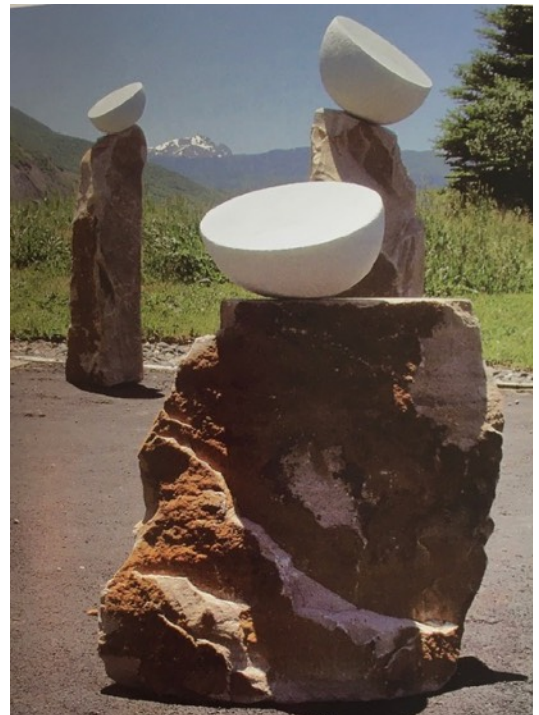
The American Embassy, Belmopan, Belize

the sequence of three *Gaias* (2005) have highly polished almost reflective surfaces, while, others, *Geode 4* (2005), for example, have carved surfaces that seem etched with archaic inscriptions as well as referents to aerial views of the earth.

Geode 4,
2005 Ceramic and concrete
15 x 18 x 12 inches
Private Collection

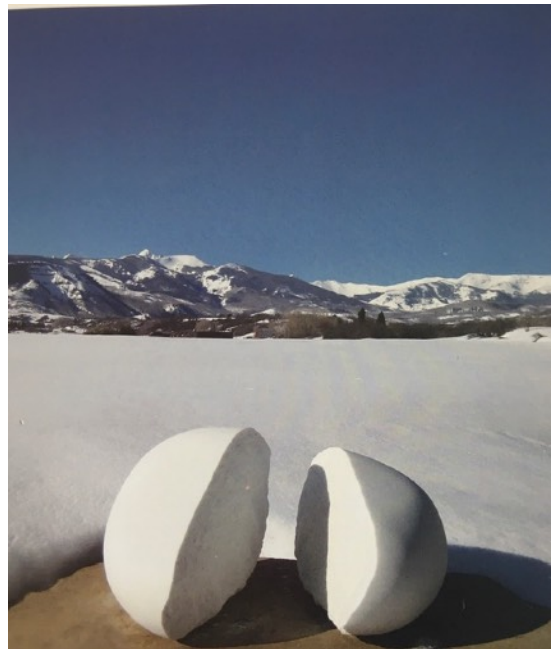


Gaia 1-111, 2004-2005
Colorado yule marble and sandstone
28 x 24 x varying heights to 64 inches
Private Collections



Exceptionally elegant with their alternately smooth or inscribed surfaces, the open halves of these sculptured orbs face serenely outwards and upwards to the sky. Placed on low lying mounts or stone plinths, all are grounded with the weight of stone resting on and connected to the earth below— while seemingly inquiring into the vastness of nature above and beyond.

The full range of such metaphysical implications is explored further in the artist's ensuing sculptural creations. Made with pristine white marble but cleft in half, *Seed* (2007) was created with an ancient technique of breaking stone with a hand chisel in a single stroke to reveal the crystalline structure inside. This swift and intense action, however acute, revealed a resplendent, though fractured, interior. It's a beautiful work of art, the title of which evokes the notion of catalyst, of growth and life evolving, even if, in its present state, it is truncated. Like *Origin* (2004), the three *Gaias* (2005), or the *Geodes* (2005-2009) with titles that evoke myths, history, and the continuum of time, these works all point to, or signal towards, or grasp at apprehending primordial elements, or even life's essence.



Seed, 2007
Colorado yule marble
24 x 30 x 24 inches

In a subsequent body of work, the *Intercessions* series (2013-2014), essentially abstract though decidedly totemic forms rise from the ground as figurative sentinels. *Rupa*, (2014) stands at an angle facing upwards and outwards, its marbled head incised with a deep cut...sliced towards its core... as if to suggest a dramatic opening up of the mind, or an intense process of

introspection, or alternatively perhaps, a profound gash, and searing pain, and questioning in the face of inexplicable adversities.



Intercession 14 (RUPA)
2014
62" x 36" x 12"
Utah Zebra Marble, Limestone,
Graphite Colored UV Balanced
Epoxy Resin
Private Collection

Its Sanskrit title *Rupa* in Buddhist and Hindu philosophies means “image to the eye” and is linked to concepts about tangible form and sensory phenomena, but also to notions of the Self. *Intercession 17 (Satyananda)*, 2013, an oval shaped form variegated with rich tones of orange and yellows, is positioned on an elongated pedestal of burned and blackened wood. The open façade of the work’s “head”, appears veined with what could be perceived as electrical currents activating its cerebral cortex. The sculpture’s Sanskrit title, *Satyananda*, refers to “an awakened one,”



Intercession 17 (Satyananda)
2013
63" x 14" x 10"
Utah Honeycomb Calcite,
Burned Wood, Paint, Engraved
Photograph, UV Balanced Epoxy
Resin
Private Collection



Missing, *Reclamation Suite* 2017
72" x 36" x 24"
Limestone, Steel, Enamel

and in Buddhism, the color orange signifies the quest for knowledge and is associated with the highest state of illumination or being, all indications that this work intimates a spiritual quest. In a later sequence of sculptural forms, the *Reclamation Suite* (2015-2017), Lovendahl combines, for the first time, marble or limestone with steel and enamel or resin. With torsos and heads made primarily with limestone and sprightly steel legs for supports, these anthropomorphic forms are idiosyncratic while seemingly playful, though *Missing* and *Jezebel* are punctured—each with a gaping hole, void, or inner eye.

A corollary to these works, but vastly different in scale and rigor of production are the large-scale public and private sculptural commissions Lovendahl has created beginning in 1997 with the *Dallas Rapid Transit Authority* project and continuing up to the present, most recently with *Sweet Grass Dance*, 2019. Sourcing stone in massive quantities and tonnage from quarries in Colorado but as far away as Vermont, Kansas and Texas, she has taken on the unusual, and



Sweet Grass Dance, 2019

Art in Public Places for Anderson Park, The City of Wheat Ridge, CO.

25 ft wide x 18 ft deep x 11 ft high

Carved, textured limestone with concrete and stainless-steel foundations.

especially rigorous practice of working with monumental blocks of stone—an ambitious, atypical, and uncommon pursuit that few artists today engage with. Though massive in scale compared to her other works, the public art projects share the artist’s continuing engagement with nature, landscape, and in the creation of sculptural works as sites of contemplation.

Lovendahl’s latest creative effort, the exhibition *Small Glimpses, Many Times* ventures beyond a sole focus on sculpture into new territory. This new body of art features works in multiple media including two-dimensional works created with Tyvek or crushed paper, small cast resin sculptures, and, for the first time, video. Representing an entirely new experiment for the artist, the new work is nonetheless consonant with past efforts in that the artist takes nature as a subject, and following in a continuum, takes the Mountain as a metaphor for delving into the nuances and complexities of perception in a world of shifting realities.

Throughout Lovendahl’s artistic trajectory, from the wall reliefs of the 1980s to the recent work, Lovendahl carves a meditative and ritualistic space— with works of art that serve as a starting point in the ongoing quest to decipher and apprehend the world —both outside and within.

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