

Feature for *Art of England*  
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### **Sculpting Life's Essence: Jill Berelowitz**

Sculptor Jill Berelowitz's sensuous torsos soar into the Mayfair air this summer, dazzling and inspiring audiences from all walks of life [Figure 1 - *Core Femme* in Cavendish Square]. At over six metres in height, Berelowitz's *Core Femme* takes centre stage in London's Cavendish Square. The artist explains that this towering yet intimate and familiar object represents 'the core through which life's energy flows.' The sculpture, which is installed as a part of the City of Westminster Sculpture Festival, consists of 24 bone resin female torsos mounted on a stainless steel pole. A plaque accompanying this monumental work reads, 'In the language of physiology, the backbone's topmost disc is named after Atlas, primordial bearer of the heavens...The sculpture is similarly mighty, yet graceful: a powerful metaphor for human strength of character, wisdom and spiritual growth.' Jill Berelowitz's art is driven by these themes, as she strives to shape the very essence of life through fresh visual statements.

In *Core Femme*, Berelowitz extends her interest in representing human forms to encompass potent parallels between architecture and sculpture. *Core Femme* appears to draw its power from within, radiating outwards as well as upwards, drawing the surrounding buildings into a unique dialogue with the artwork. When she was commissioned to create the sculpture, Berelowitz felt 'overwhelmed and delighted that my dream to have a large, imposing *Core Femme* finally became a reality.' She has received an exciting array of critical acclaim and attention from the art world for this life-affirming sculpture, and it will soon have another starring role, this time in Mecklenburgh Square at the Bloomsbury Art Fair.

The inaugural Bloomsbury Art Fair (14-16 July) will see this prominent hotbed of intellectual and cultural history play host to the city's hottest galleries and artists. *Core Femme* will be shown alongside work from world-class British contributors including Damien Hirst, Banksy, and the President of the Royal British Society of Sculptors. Profits from the Bloomsbury Art Fair will be donated to a coalition of charities. Motivation, the Parachute Regiment Charity, the Southern Spinal Injuries Trust and the Spinal Injuries Association all focus on healing and education for those affected by major physical trauma. Berelowitz's *Core Femme* encapsulates the event's impetus and ethos so ideally that the artist will generously donate half of the sculpture's sale proceeds to the Fair's charities.

Jill Berelowitz studied sculpture with renowned Finnish artist Karen Jaroszynska and later at the Johannesburg School of Art [Figure 2 – Jill in her studio?]. Berelowitz was enriched by a traditional art training background and learned the technically complex process of lost wax bronze casting. By the age of 23, already with two young children, Berelowitz opened her studio in Durban, South Africa, and developed her creativity through numerous community art projects. In a quest for creative freedom, she began to explore more contemporary materials, using them in new ways. Her inventive approach to optical resin, in which she carefully imbeds gold and silver leaf, and even her own handwriting, has won Berelowitz a reputation for mastering the paradox of fluidity and solidity in her visually arresting work.

Berelowitz's South African origins are especially poignant for *Tumbleweed* [Figure 3 – *Tumbleweed*]. She explains, 'We were part of the wave of emigrants from South Africa. Families were dispersed across all continents of the world. *Tumbleweed* symbolises survival, dispersal, of seed, rebirth and regeneration.' The burnished metal figures in the centre of the bronze-cast apple branches are the core strength of the family unit, containing the promise of new generations bursting forth, carried by the winds of life.

She moved from her native South Africa to London 26 years ago and is one of the capital's most energetic sculptors. Berelowitz has exhibited at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, at Christie's, and at the Timepieces exhibition on Cork Street sponsored by Rado Swiss Watches. Her high-profile commissions include the life-size *Pair Oar* rowers at Henley-on-Thames, an exhibition for Elizabeth Arden, the Goldsmith Guild Exporters Award for Excellence, and the Investec Challenge rugby trophy. Movement and the passage of time are

prominent themes in much of her work, whether Berelowitz is planning a sculpture on an intimate or monumental scale.

Like *Tumbleweed*, Berelowitz's *Tree of Life* is cast in bronze from apple branches carefully selected by the artist in a 300-year-old English orchard [Figure 4 - *Tree of Life*]. A delicately reconceived fruit tree, the sculpture draws on the powerful story of the Garden of Eden and the generosity of the natural world for its inspiration. Outstretched bodies reach, twist and intermingle with the branches in joyful gestures, symbolizing human interdependence with the rhythms of nature. Cycles and seasons draw Berelowitz's innovative corpus together and bind it in a rhythm of creativity.

Persephone is the Greek goddess of spring and rebirth. Berelowitz's *Persephone* takes this mythology as its springboard [Figure 5 – *Persephone*]. Akin to *Core Femme*, female forms in *Persephone* organically symbolize the origins of life. Berelowitz's sensual *Persephone* presents the viewer with a contemporary reworking of the ancient Greek myth of spring and fertility. Pewter relief mounted on Perspex allows for a smooth an inviting surface. This representation of a halved pomegranate alludes both to the Greek goddess who was tricked by Hades into spending a cyclical period of time in the underworld, and to the true fruit of the biblical Tree of Life. In Berelowitz's shimmering sculpture, the pomegranate's seeds are transformed into generously crafted female bodies. These feminine forms hold the promise of new life and new beginnings.

Berelowitz's work emphasizes life's positive aspects, and the artist sees her art as a triumphant process which can overcome great challenges. She works best in the quiet hours between dusk and dawn, with Maggie May – her miniature dachshund – for company. In addition to developing her own work in exciting directions, Berelowitz runs a dynamic and vibrant teaching studio. On teaching, she said, 'I enjoy inspiring my pupils and guiding them, allowing them to express their emotions and talents through sculpture. I get the same if not more pleasure out of their achievements and successful creations as they do.' Her advice to emerging artists is twofold: take anatomy seriously and keep making art in the face of all life's challenges. Her intuitive understanding of human nature and her spiritual approach to the interconnectivity of human relationships comes across with gentle clarity in *Philosophie*, a sculpture now in the Unilever Corporate Collection.

*Philosophie* invites us to think about the profound links between matter and spirit, as it blurs boundaries between language and form. For *Philosophie*, Berelowitz uses her own handwriting as a raw material, delicately tracing a circular element framing a female torso. This feminine form is arched in joyous celebration of love and life. The text is the image, set within optical resin. For example, 'Embrace partnership...infinite...aspiring' delineates the right arm's upper reach. Curves of the artist's handwritten words are writ large in the fertility of the proudly feminine body protected by its resin casing. Berelowitz explains that the transparent medium's role is to 'preserve my philosophy of eternal life cycles and regeneration.'

The words that create the world and the female body within Berelowitz's *Philosophie* summarize the artist's beliefs in a rich, provocative way. 'Passion, the essence of mankind', writes Berelowitz, 'makes the world revolve. Bodies moving, tumbling or turning around create the eternal life cycle. Tactile sensuous torsos reflect passion and infinite intimate imagery.' Jill Berelowitz's philosophy emanates from all her sculptures. Each proclaims the promise of rebirth and the strength of humanity in its own unique way, as intimate as a pulse and as specific as a comforting embrace.