

# the BOLD & the Beautiful



Words by Marsha McHenry Carroll  
Photos by Joe Photo



*Cybele Rowe, a bold force in a male dominated sculpting world, couples purposeful distortion and dynamic patterns and colors, and widens the gender gap with the sheer size of her work—making her the diva of mammoth sculptors*

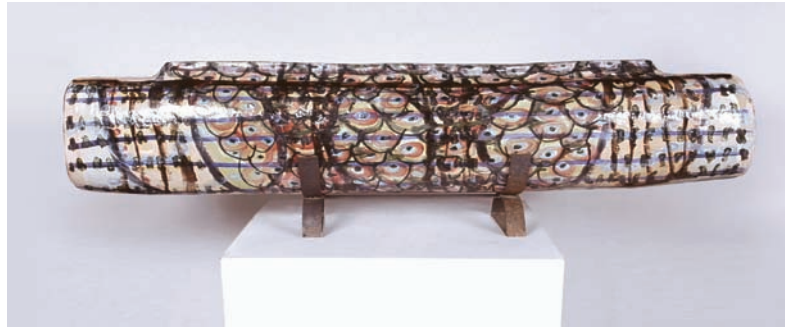
At first take, Australian-born artist Cybele Rowe's rural Silverado Canyon digs seem to contradict her off-beat sculptures—many of them monumental human forms in unusual yet whimsical body positions and striking colors.

She and husband Peter Bollinger, accomplished commercial illustrator for Shannon Associates out of New York, left the first phase of their dream life—a live/work loft overlooking Manhattan's east side—with the birth of their first child, Zak, now 8. "I couldn't get used to the proportion living in Manhattan," says Rowe. "Everything was so big—so much bigger than what I produced. I had a hard time gaining perspective."

To relocate, all they needed was a high-speed Internet connection for Bollinger's work, room for a giant kiln for Rowe's sculptures and an environment that cultivated inspiration. What they came up with is a 100 year old dance hall in an old gold-mining area in Orange County, which they converted into their home—with some slight revisions of course—bamboo floors, the wood exterior drenched in raw sienna paint (Rowe's obsessed with color), floor to ceiling sliding glass doors mostly left open, bringing in the rich smell of trees and dirt and the sounds of a creek running alongside the house. And, a nursery for an unexpected baby girl, Galatea, now 18 months old. ▸



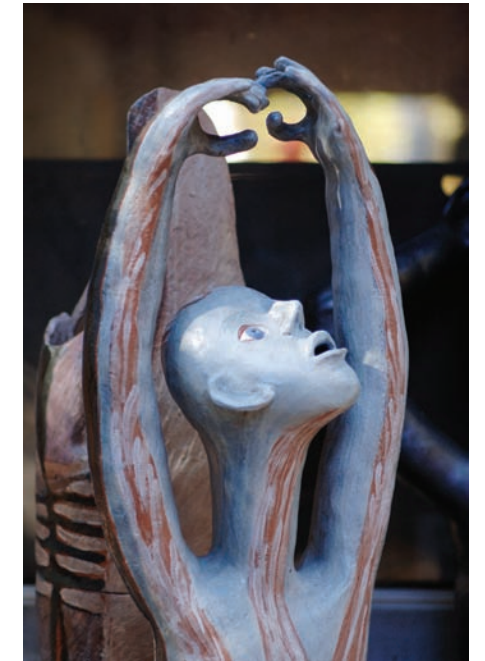




Rowe's exuberance and prolific inspiration permeates her creations. "I love working in clay. It's the most primitive medium," she says. "It goes from heart to head to hand and it lets you make mistakes." Rowe says her forms are an accumulation of everything that happens in her day. "I don't know what I'm making before I roll it out and I steal a lot of ideas from myself," building off previous works, pushing the limits further each time.

She's had the Walker series—big organic forms resembling abstract pairs of legs and most recently Husks, representing human shells as temples and pace (subtly using Italian for peace), these forms have oversized feet representing totems or symbols.

On first encounter with a Rowe sculpture, you know that the message is passionate—overt elements of hope and love. Then again, it seems to say, "don't take me too seriously." Her wit surfaces again in names like Long Cool Drink of Water and PFI (Pleasing Female Imagery). It's this incongruity that's the engaging aspect of her style. Daunting yet mesmerizing, the fluid shapes project the dichotomy of static in motion. >



*"I want to remain fearless about loving and building."*





Just how does a five-foot-six female construct freestanding enormous statues without use of an infrastructure? “I’ve been at this for 25 years, and now I can eyeball it and figure out what works.” She makes her sculptures in two sections, mostly so they will fit in the huge kiln on the back deck of her studio.

Rowe’s bio is illustrious. The director of the oldest gallery in Australia started selling her work before she was even out of school. By the age of 29, she was a guest lecturer at the Smithsonian and those days she could hardly afford to buy her own art.

With many group exhibitions from Sydney to Soho to Los Angeles, she’s also had exhibitions at New York’s Bergdorf Goodman Stores, The World Bank and Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Rowe, now 43, doesn’t feel the need to edit her compositions and messages as in earlier years. She says, “I want to remain fearless about loving and building.” □

Cybele Rowe’s work can be viewed at the following galleries:

The Lowe Gallery	Sculpturesite Gallery	William Merrill Gallery
Santa Monica	San Francisco	Laguna Beach
310.449.0184	415.495.6400	949.464.0067

