

# ARTSY

## These 20 Female Artists Are Pushing Sculpture Forward

ARTSY EDITORIAL BY TESS THACKARA JUL 30TH, 2018 4:52 PM

Sculpture was once considered the domain of ambitious male artists, a medium as challenging in its physicality as it was limitless in scope. But for several decades, artists from Eva Hesse and Senga Nengudi to Phyllida Barlow and Ursula von Rydingsvard have carved a place for women working in contemporary sculpture. And in 2018, it's arguably female artists who are creating some of the most interesting, challenging, and ambitious forms—freely taking the body apart, prodding taboos, and embracing the grotesque.

The eclectic group of 20 international sculptors highlighted here ranges from emerging to mid-career talents. What connections can we draw between them? There's the extraordinary influence of Louise Bourgeois, for one—nearly half of these artists cited the late artist as one of their icons. Doris Salcedo looms large, too. Meanwhile, many of these practices underscore the fact that clay has been comfortably absorbed into the artist's toolbox, moving well beyond the realm of vessels to become a commonplace material—as capable as steel, wood, resin, and other materials in pushing boundaries and helping us to see the world anew.

Together, these artists are helping to define, question, and evolve the future of their medium.

### Yasue Maetake [Follow](#)

B. 1973, Japan. Lives and works in Queens, New York.



Yasue Maetake, *A Series of Three-Legged Idol*, 2013-17. Courtesy of the artist.

Yasue Maetake's abstract sculptures include large-scale, sci-fi-inflected forms made of industrial steel, resin, and wood; elegant paper constructions that extend like wind-flexed sails, defying gravity; and diminutive, anthropomorphic objects. Maetake, who initially trained in glass engraving, approaches her practice as a deep study in materials, pushing them to the limits by welding, burning, creating chemical reactions to experiment with the color produced from oxidation, or submitting them to the forces of gravity.



Installation view of work by Yasue Maetake at Reverse Subterrestrial at The Chimney, Brooklyn, New York, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

Maetake wants to achieve sculptures that are “solid and enduring, but that appear temporary and fragile,” she said. In works created from handmade paper, she will often expose the material to corroded copper and steel rust in order to create vivid turquoise and reddish brown residues, using altered paper to craft bright, dancing forms or textured wall pieces. “It is this struggle with immutable natural forces that is the motivating force behind my creative urge,” she said.



Tess Thackara is Artsy's Writer-at-Large.