

PRIVATE VIEW NEW YORK

BROODING AND DELICATE

Esther Kläs's sculptures have weight

"ON THE ONE hand it doesn't quite make sense, and on the other hand it makes all the sense in the world," says Fairfax Dorn, executive director of Marfa Ballroom, referring to **Esther Kläs's** sculpture. The young German artist, now based in New York, provokes such two-minded reactions by filling her abstract pieces with unexpected and sometimes startling juxtapositions of material, form, color, and texture.

Dorn first encountered Kläs's work at New York's Sculpture Center in the middle of 2010—around the time the artist was completing her MFA at Hunter College—and immediately knew she wanted to include one of her pieces in the group sculpture exhibition she was organizing at her Texas nonprofit, to run through February 2011. That show, "Immaterial," featured Kläs's *Llena*, 2010, a coffee-table-like form in dense concrete topped by a glazed ceramic globe with an undulating surface. With continued viewing the work shifts from ungainly to captivating, thanks to its unresolved contrasts—between the washed-out orange-sherbet tint of the concrete and the lustrous black of the glaze, as well as between the hard rectangles of the massive support and the alluring curves of the small object displayed on it. "It was brooding yet delicate," says Dorn.

Back in New York Kläs is having her first solo show at Chelsea's **Peter Blum Gallery**, from the 17th of this month through January 7, 2012. Prepare to be surprised and seduced. —ERIC BRYANT

Esther Kläs
Hero heat hallo, 2010.
Aquaresin pigments
and wood.
53 x 32½ x 60 in.



FROM LEFT: JASON MANDELLA, ESTHER KLÄS, AND PETER BLUM GALLERY, NEW YORK; PATRICK MCMULLAN

CURATOR'S CHOICE

ROSELEE GOLDBERG

Founding Director and Curator of Performa



What works of art would you own, if space and cost were no object?

All the artists I've shown or worked with, including Marina Abramović, Francis Alÿs, Christian Boltanski, Jack Goldstein, Isaac Julien, William Kentridge, Sherry Levine, Robert Longo, Piero Manzoni, Shirin Neshat, Giuliano Paolini, Cindy Sherman, and Laurie Simmons.

Which artist, living or dead, would you most like to have a drink with? What might you discuss?

A round table with Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, Erik Satie, and Rolf de Maré, director of the Ballet Suédois, to find out how they put together *Relâche* in 1924 in Paris. I would ask them to describe, from beginning to end, how it came together and how it unfolded over the evening and whose idea it was to include a movie during intermission.

What's the last great book you read?

I tend to have several going at once, and at the moment they're all nonfiction: a book on the history of memory; another on the route of a collection of carved objects through two families, one in Paris, the other in Vienna, at the turn of the past century; Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul*; and several on the recent economic vortex we're in right now. I'm obsessed with trying to understand how this rampant, over-the-top capitalism shapes cultural values across the globe. I'm also rediscovering the *New York Times*—it's an entire culture all its own, especially now when hard copy is threatened and even the great U.K. newspapers have come to resemble gossipy tabloids.

Which city gives you the greatest hope for contemporary art's future and why?

New York. It is being reinvented every day. It is the original walking city. Sometimes it feels like a small town—I bump into people I know everywhere I go—but then it has the concentration and intensity of the great metropolis that it is. It is compact, this island of ours, and if you made a map of the art world, it would cover huge swaths of the city.

What's one artistic trend you wish would die out?

The monologue, but I think it has already died.

What's your favorite place for quiet contemplation?

The Writers Room in New York, where I do most of my writing.

If you had to pick one or two highlights from this year's Performa, what would they be?

I couldn't possibly choose. But I could describe an exciting new feature of this year's biennial: the Performa Institute, which will run classes every day from noon till 3 P.M. taught by biennial artists and by curators and writers on related topics, such as Russian Constructivism and archeology. It's located in an old school in Little Italy with perfect-size classrooms.

What's unique about curating performance-based work?

The audience. Making sure the members have a profound, visceral experience that becomes lodged in their memories.

What's the last performance you witnessed that truly moved, shocked, or otherwise deeply affected you?

I am moved by an accumulation of work by many artists. Many of the Performa Commissions, including work by Isaac Julien, Jesper Just, Wangechi Mutu, Adam Pendleton, and Yvonne Rainer, have moved me deeply.