

Frida Baranek (b. 1961)

“I live with these things around me. There are a lot of industrial leftovers, and I thought I could do something with them.” – FRIDA BARANEK, 1993

Brazilian-born Frida Baranek uses heavy tools, mechanical equipment, and discarded industrial materials to create large sculptures. She transforms leftover steel sheets and tubes, iron wire, and even airplane parts into abstract sculptures that seem to resemble forms found in the natural world. These sculptures are often about contrasts. They look lightweight, like birds' nests for example, but are actually quite heavy. At a distance they appear to be made of sticks or other natural materials, but they are made from manufactured materials. Some works look unstable, like they might tip over easily, but they are actually quite solid and sturdy.

Baranek also explores certain social issues in her sculptures. By demonstrating that even industrial debris and other discarded materials can have meaning if reused and remade, Baranek's sculptures lie at the crossroads of two important issues in our world today: environmentalism and recycling. These ideas are particularly important in her home country of Brazil. In the past forty years, this largest of South American countries has experienced immense changes related to rapid urbanization and industrialization. Baranek is one of a generation of artists who are using industrial materials and commenting on the health of Brazil's environment and industrialization more generally.

Like many contemporary artists, Baranek is something of a “global citizen.” Since the 1980s, she has lived and worked in São Paulo, Paris, Berlin, and New York City.

Selected Bibliography

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