

**Roni Horn** was born in 1955 in New York, where she continues to live and work. She received a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1975 and an MFA from Yale University in 1978. Since her first solo show at the Kunstraum in Munich in 1980, she has exhibited widely and was included in such major shows as the Venice Biennale (1997) and Documenta IX (1992). Recent one-person exhibitions were presented at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2000); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1999); De Pont Foundation for Contemporary Art, Tilburg, the Netherlands (1998; 1994); Fotomuseum Winterthur (1997); and the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus (1996). Horn's *Things That Happen Again* (1986) has been a long-term exhibition at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas, since 1989.

#### selected bibliography, chronologically arranged

*This is Me, This is You*. Paris: Edition 7L, 2002.

*Dictionary of Water*. Paris: Edition 7L, 2001. Text by Roni Horn.

*Still Water*. Santa Fe: SITE Santa Fe, 2000. Texts by Jan Avgikos, Kathleen Merrill Campagnolo, and Roni Horn.

*Another Water*. Zurich: Scalo, 2000. Text by Roni Horn.

*Roni Horn*. London: Phaidon Press, 2000. Texts by Thierry De Duve, Roni Horn, Clarice Lispector, and Louise Neri, and an interview by Lynne Cooke.

*Events of Relation*. Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1999. Texts by Marie-Laure Bernadac, Roni Horn, and Nancy Spector, and an interview by Laurent Bossé.

*You Are the Weather*. Zurich: Scalo Verlag, in association with the Fotomuseum Winterthur, 1997.

*Earth Grow Thick*. Columbus: Wexner Center for the Arts, 1996. Texts by Amada Cruz, Emily Dickinson, Sherri Geldin, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Roni Horn, bell hooks, Judith Hoos Fox, and Sarah J. Rogers.

*Making Being Here Enough. Installations from 1980 to 1995*. Basel: Kunsthalle, in association with Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover, 1995. Texts by Roni Horn and Thomas Kellein.

*Gurgles, Sucks, Echoes*. New York: Matthew Marks Gallery, 1995. Text by Lynne Tillman.

#### selected artists books

*TO PLACE*, ongoing limited-edition book series:

Book 1: *Bluff Life*. New York: Peter Blum Edition, 1990. 14 color images; edition of 1150; special edition of 150; 36 pp.

Book 2: *Folds*. New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1991. 36 color images; letterpress; edition of 700; 72 pp.

Book 3: *Lava*. New York: Roni Horn, 1992. 16 color and 29 tritone images; letterpress; edition of 750; special edition of 100; 92 pp.

Book 4: *Pooling Water*. Cologne: Walther König, 1994. 2 vols.; English and Icelandic text; edition of 1000; special edition of 6. Vol. 1: 27 color and 25 duotone images; 96 pp. Vol. 2: 4 color images; 176 pp.

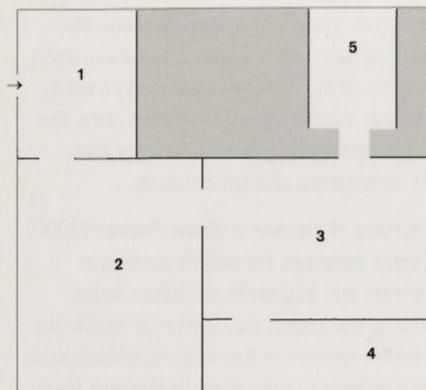
Book 5: *Verne's Journey*. Cologne: Walther König, 1995. 19 color and 8 duotone images; edition of 1000; 56 pp.

Book 6: *Haraldsdóttir*. Denver: Ginny Williams, 1996. 30 color and 31 duotone images; edition of 1000; special edition of 100; 96 pp.

Book 7: *Arctic Circles*. Denver: Ginny Williams, 1998. 67 color and 7 duotone images; edition of 1650; 140 pp.

Book 8: *Becoming a Landscape*. Denver: Ginny Williams, 2001. 2 vols., each 22 color images and 44 pp.; edition of 900; special edition of 100.

#### site map and checklist



#### Part I

1. *This is Me, This is You*, 1999–2000  
96 photographs  
each 12 ½ x 10 ¼ inches  
Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York
2. *Some Thames*, 2000  
32 of 80 photographs  
each 25 x 38 inches  
Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York
3. *Clowd and Cloun (Gray)*, 2001  
28 photographs: 14 of 16 cloud images,  
27 x 35 inches; 14 of 16 clown images,  
27 x 27 inches  
Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York
4. *Untitled (Yes)–1*, 2001  
glass  
46 x 26 ½ x 17 inches  
Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York
5. *Untitled (Yes)–2*, 2001  
glass  
46 x 26 ½ x 17 inches  
Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

#### Bookshop

*Saying Water*, 2001  
audio CD  
72 minutes  
Courtesy Dia Center for the Arts

*Becoming a Landscape*  
*TO PLACE*, ongoing limited-edition book  
series, Vol. 8  
Denver: Ginny Williams, 2001

#### Part II

1. *This is Me, This is You*, 1999–2000  
96 photographs  
each 12 ½ x 10 ¼ inches  
Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York
2. *Clowd and Cloun (Blue)*, 2001  
32 photographs: 16 cloud images, 27 x 35  
inches; 16 clown images, 27 x 27 inches  
Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York
3. *Becoming a Landscape*, 2001  
20 images in 10 pairs: 6 images, 21 x 21  
inches; 14 images, 24 x 31 inches  
Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York
4. *Untitled (Yes)–1*, 2001  
glass  
46 x 26 ½ x 17 inches  
Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York
5. *Untitled (Yes)–2*, 2001  
glass  
46 x 26 ½ x 17 inches  
Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

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cover photo: Roni Horn

#### Roni Horn

Part I: October 17, 2001–February 17, 2002

*"Blah, blah, blah, your hair,  
Blah, blah, blah, your eyes;  
Blah, blah, blah, blah, care,  
Blah, blah, blah, blah, skies."*

—George and Ira Gershwin, "Blah, Blah, Blah" (1930)

Part II: February 27–June 16, 2002

*"Blah, blah, blah, blah, moon,  
Blah, blah, blah, above;  
Blah, blah, blah, blah, croon,  
Blah, blah, blah, blah, love."*

—George and Ira Gershwin, "Blah, Blah, Blah" (1930)



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## Roni Horn

"Blah, Blah, Blah," the Gershwin's satirical skewing of sentiments now so routine as to be stultified, teases the entrant to Roni Horn's exhibition. Is her title a forewarning? Or an apology? Or a diversion? Interpreting its role poses the dilemma of how certain recurrent familiar but fundamental experiences—encounters with faces and clouds, eyes and skies—might be reanimated, how they might be vivified, so that, unbidden and unrehearsed, they become once more arresting and affecting.

Questions of difference and identity are the foundation stones of Horn's practice. This two-part exhibition was specifically devised to manifest such concerns, in both its form and content. Containing two sculptures and three photographically based series, each part is similar in structure, though different in substance. Each installment includes the two-part work *This is Me, This is You* (1999–2000), which is presented on opposite walls of the entrance gallery, as well as *Untitled (Yes)–1* and *Untitled (Yes)–2* (both 2001), twin works—each a glass block, one crystal clear, hence radiantly transparent, the other black, a depthless mirror. The remaining works will change.

Those who visit only one part will have a circumscribed experience; for the whole is relational, critically engaging the viewer as an essential agent who interacts with each of the parts. That interaction is crucial; for it is only in memory—only over time—that these dual experiences come together to disclose the bifurcated unity. Circumstantial differences also deflect each visitor's experience. For example, contingencies of light and weather may substantially alter the effect and impact of the sculpture: in the late afternoon, direct sun raking over the sensual curve of the glass meniscus animates this volatile transparent work in vivid but unpredictable ways; more subtle shifts in the cool northern light in the room containing its companion alters the confounding reflections, generated as the spectator circles around it, subjecting it to slow searching scrutiny. But, even the sequence in which this pair is initially encountered can forever deflect one's reading. Whether one sculpture becomes and remains dominant or determining may depend on the order in which they were initially discovered. On finding the first, one neither automatically nor necessarily anticipates the second, but, having seen both, one can no longer engage with one without being reminded of its antipode. Thereafter the two are indelibly conjoined, seen in relation to each other, complementing and detracting in equal parts.

Autonomy, one of the most prized qualities of the quintessential modernist artwork, is undermined by making evident the object's contextual dependencies—dependencies derived from the framing conditions of site, context, institution, linguistics, and semiotics, as well as conditions inherent in the very act of observation. While acknowledging these factors as integral to experiencing any work of art, Horn accentuates the specificity of the encounter, individuating it by stressing the work's quiddity, locking it into the here and now of the sensed moment. Still, she keeps alive awareness that this experience will inevitably feel different in memory—that is, with hindsight—and, yet again, when overlaid by a subsequent encounter, and then by further retrospective reflection, and so on . . .

Fundamental to that dialectic is the interplay between stasis and motility, between the fleeting and the fixed. This dynamic is inscribed into each of the works in the show, albeit in different ways, and to varying degrees. The forms of the sculptures are made finite by slowly solidifying molten glass, an everyday material, transfixing in its raw solid state. The casting and cooling process can be traced via numerous telling details, for in its final appearance the work betrays a certain level of contingency, of unpredictability.

Elusive, amorphous, volatile, and restless, the surface of the river in *Some Thames* (2000) constantly mutates. Shot on days with strong cloud coverage, the water's surface, in mirroring the sky above, refracts and splices, sheers and fragments reflections to the point where it itself becomes a constantly mutating chameleon, its identity—its nature and character—indeterminate, indecipherable. The frozen moment of the resulting photographic image is given highly ambiguous scale in Horn's seductive prints, since its timeless geography may either be read as vast tracts of pristine terrain, or, conversely and just as easily, as an intimate immersing detail of a microscopic topography, whose unseen bounds once again cannot begin to be located.

If reflection and transparency render paradoxical the obdurate physicality of the sculptures, something parallel occurs, albeit transposed into a very different vocabulary, in *Clowd and Cloun (Gray)* and its variant *Clowd and Cloun (Blue)* (both 2001), as contending modalities of phenomena and appearance are explored in a series of alternating images of the two motifs. Given that dissolution or erasure is inevitable, mutability of appearance is integral to the phenomenon of the cloud. The opposite is proposed for the clown, for it is a constant, a symbolic form whose identity is rooted in a conventionally defined appearance, one that occludes the specifics of the persona—the player—who temporarily assumes that guise. Here, the title assumes heightened significance: the misspelling that melds one motif with the other, confusing grammar but making sense nonetheless, adds a dimension possible only in a text that is read. Sometimes tangentially, sometimes directly, language in Horn's art vies with vision as the most basic means of making sense of the world, of shaping experience. Only rarely are the two modes collapsed into or made congruent with each other, as in this title, which succinctly embodies aspects of meaning that cannot otherwise be stated by envisaging what might not otherwise be articulated.<sup>1</sup>

Taken with a point-and-shoot camera, the panoply of images of a young girl that make up *This is Me, This is You* (1999–2000) is presented in two paired groups located on opposite walls of the gallery. Minute variations between individual pairs of portraits counterpoint radical shifts in mood, dress, and expression. Unstable, irresolvable, the relation of appearance to identity—indeed, the nature of identity itself—is revealed as a fundamental but mutable distinction, intimated in a child's explanatory proposition: this is me, this is you. The most minimal visual differences are in part the products of temporal distance, of durations no longer than what it takes to turn from one image to its counterpart on the wall behind. Highly attuned to such slight shifts, the gaze of the viewer volleys back and

forth, oscillating between moving and fixing, looking and remembering, encountering and echoing, present and past. Ultimately, the amount of information disclosed is too great—too precise, too specific. Like the other works in this exhibition, *This is Me, This is You* eludes memory and requires being seen again and again, yet each time, necessarily, it seems different, for the viewer herself will not be—indeed cannot be—the same.

That the pathos of implicit loss is encapsulated within the transfixing pleasures of the vivified present becomes a muted refrain haunting Horn's work, as it does Wallace Stevens's "Bouquet of Roses in Sunlight," a poem Horn cherishes: "Too much as they are to be changed by metaphor, / Too actual, things that in being real / Make any imaginings of them lesser things."<sup>2</sup> However, shifts in the apparent reality of things ultimately count for less than the changes the subject undergoes: "And yet this effect is a consequence of the way we feel," the poet concedes. Horn concurs: "I'm not very involved with the third dimension in the traditional way we define sculpture," she once declared in an interview. "I'm more concerned with human consciousness and the way it synthesizes experience."<sup>3</sup> Later in the same poem, Stevens beautifully articulates how this apprehension may emerge: "Our sense of these things changes and they change, / Not as in metaphor, but in our sense / Of them. So sense exceeds all metaphor."<sup>4</sup>

L.C.

## notes

1. "The various bodies of work overlap naturally," Horn avers. "The conceptual origins of one work often bleed over into another form. That's why I've never restricted myself to any single idiom. . . . Each form, to me, comments on and enriches the experience of the other." Roni Horn, "Inner Geography," a written interview by Jan Howard, in *Roni Horn: Inner Geography* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1994), n. p.
2. Wallace Stevens, "Bouquet of Roses in Sunlight," in *Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1965), p. 430.
3. Roni Horn, "Talking Objects: Interviews with Younger Sculptors," interview by Wade Saunders, *Art in America* 73, no. 11 (November 1985), p. 120. On a later occasion, she amplified her position: "I understand all the work to be of a nonabstract nature regardless of the style, form, or explicit subject matter because all the work . . . is concerned with evoking experiences that are in themselves—and their relationship to you, the viewer—the ultimate subject and content of the work. I want to equate the experience of the work with its meaning." (Roni Horn, "Five Questions: By Way of Introduction," interview by Laurent Bossé, in *Roni Horn: Event of Relation* [Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1999], p. 9.)
4. Stevens, p. 431.